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Theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party

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Marxism Today

Contents

November 1979 Volume 23 Number 11

Focus 2

Abortion • Jury-vetting • Non-aligned conference

Andrew Gamble

The Decline of the Conservative Party 6

The Tory Party was, until the sixties, the dominant party in British politics. It then declined. In response, it changed, culminating in the Thatcher government. Andrew Gamble, author of *The Conservative Nation* and a lecturer in politics at Sheffield University, looks at why and how the Conservative Party has changed – and where it is going.

Mike Bleaney

The Tories' Economic Strategy 12

The Tories claimed that their economic policies would mark a radical break with the past. Since their election, they have moved quickly. Mike Bleaney, a lecturer in economics at Nottingham University, examines what they are trying to do and what its consequences are likely to be.

Mike and Sean Morrissey

Northern Ireland: Why the Trade Unions are Central 17

The economic crisis in Northern Ireland is much worse than that in Britain. The working class is also very much more divided. Sean Morrissey, an official of the Transport and General Workers' Union in Belfast, and Mike Morrissey, a lecturer at the Ulster Polytechnic, argue that, in the present situation, the trade unions are crucial.

Discussion 24

The Working Class and the Broad Democratic Alliance

1 John Peck/2 Bert Pearce

The writers continue this important discussion.

Reviews 28

Arnold Kettle – Raymond Williams: Politics and Letters

John Foster – The Making of a Ruling Class

Mike Jones – State Housing in Britain

Notes 31

Editorial office
16 King Street, London WC2E 8HY
Telephone 01-836 2151

Editor Martin Jacques

Editorial board
Irene Brennan, Jack Cohen, Dan Connor, John Foster, Jean Gardiner, Eric Hobsbawm, John Hoffman, Alan Hunt, Arnold Kettle, Betty Matthews, Bert Pearce, Dave Priscott, Bob Rowthorn, Mike Seifert, Sue Slipman, Dave Wynn.

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FOCUS

ABORTION

John Corrie's Private Member's Bill to amend the 1967 Abortion Act represents the most serious threat there has ever been to a woman's right to choose when to have children. There was a majority of 144 in favour of the Bill at its second reading and the Standing Committee which will now consider it in detail has eighteen members, of whom only five (all Labour) are known to be opposed to the Bill, while twelve are favourably disposed towards it. No more than three are women. This parliamentary session is an especially long one, which lessens the chances of the Bill falling due to lack of time; and the overwhelming majority of Tories who voted for the second reading (176 for, 14 against — compared with Labour's 54 for, 82 against) suggests that it may well be given government time if necessary.

An even more formidable factor in its favour has been the propaganda war which preceded it. In the run-up to this year's General Election, there was a sudden spate of grisly stories in the press, alleging that various foetuses had 'cried out', or had been left 'struggling for life' after abortion. There is no doubt that the publicity was deliberately orchestrated: one incident took place in July 1978, but did not hit the headlines until 25 March 1979; another took place in January this year, but did not make news until April.

It cannot be too strongly stressed that all these allegations have been investigated by the Department of Health and Social Services and *none* has been substantiated. However, in each case the media lost interest after the initial sensation, and failed to give anything like equal coverage to the subsequent findings. Thus, it became firmly fixed in the minds of the public that late abortions were commonly performed with the result that 'babies' capable of surviving were left to die by callous women and their doctors. The provision in Corrie's Bill to reduce the upper time limit from 28 weeks to 20 weeks has proved to be its chief asset in winning support. But in fact, Corrie has been able to exploit the public outrage engendered by inaccurate and artificial news coverage to introduce a whole range of severely restrictive measures. It is estimated that if the Bill is passed in its present form, it will reduce the number of legal abortions by 60%.

This attempt to restrict women's freedom to control their own fertility fits in neatly with Thatcher's attempt to promote a 'family policy' while cutting public spending. The Tories hope to throw back into the lap of the family (which invariably means 'mum') functions which have previously been performed by social workers, health visitors, geriatric and nursery nurses, and others. If paid public sector workers are to be replaced by unpaid domestic workers, it is necessary to ensure that the latter are firmly tied to the home. The fact that ever-increasing numbers of women are combining family life with paid employment has much to do with the availability of effective birth control. The Corrie Bill will drastically reduce that availability — since many thousands of women cannot safely use the Pill, the only form of contraception which is totally reliable; and many thousands more cannot safely use the IUD, the next most reliable method.

What is most important at this stage is to ensure that *accurate* information about current abortion practice and the implications of Corrie's Bill is disseminated as widely as possible. The anti-abortionists deal in sentiment and emotion: their greatest advantage is the public's flimsy grasp of the facts.

In 1976, 81% of abortions took place before the 13th week of pregnancy; 15% before the 20th week and less than one per cent after that — comprising 811 from 20 to 23 weeks and 164 at or beyond 24 weeks (in 3.5% of cases the time was not stated). Doctors and pregnancy counsellors confirm that women who have late abortions are often those who are most in need of them: girls under 16 or mentally subnormal women who fail to report their pregnancies through fear or ignorance; older women who mistake the symptoms of pregnancy for those of the menopause; and women in whom foetal abnormalities could only have been detected after the 20th week of gestation. It is not always easy to judge the age of a foetus and doctors usually allow themselves a 3-4 week margin for error, so the practical effect of the Corrie Bill would be to make abortion extremely difficult to obtain after 16 weeks. In the vast majority of cases, delays beyond the 12 weeks are caused by the shortage of National Health Service facilities (which may be reduced even further by public spending cuts). If the Bill goes through, women who are forced to seek late abortions by the failure of the NHS to provide them at an earlier, safer stage, will find themselves prevented by law from having them. The rich will turn to Harley Street, the poor to the backstreets, and the numbers of unwanted and consequently maltreated babies will be bound to increase.

The current time limit of 28 weeks is based on medical knowledge in 1929, when the Infant Life (Preservation) Act was passed, designed to stop foetuses being aborted after they were old enough to survive independently of the mother. There is still no evidence that any foetus born before 24 weeks can survive because at that stage the lungs are not sufficiently well developed to take in oxygen. In rare insances, foetuses of 26-28 weeks have survived. If Corrie's Bill is passed, abortion after 20 weeks will not be possible unless two doctors certify that tests have shown the child will be severely handicapped, and the woman is no more than 28 weeks pregnant; or 'where any person in good faith acts for the purpose only of preserving the life of the mother'. If the health or life of the mother is merely *at risk*, abortion will not be permissable after 20 weeks.

As for abortions before the 20th week, Corrie's Bill seeks to restict very considerably the grounds on which these may be obtained. Under the 1967 Act, doctors are able to measure the risk (either to the life of the mother or to the physical or mental health of her or her children) against the risk of continuing the pregnancy. The Bill removes that possibility, and allows abortion only where the women's life is in '*grave*' danger; or where there is a '*substantial*' risk of '*serious*' injury to the woman's physical or mental health, or that of her children. It will, of course, be extremely difficult in most cases to establish whether the danger is 'grave', the risk 'substantial' or the likely injury 'serious'. In 1978, out of a total of 112,055 abortions performed on residents in England and Wales, 95,688 were performed on grounds of risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the woman or her children. Only a few of these would have been legal under the terms of Corrie's Bill. The Lane Committee (which conducted the most exhaustive inquiry into abortion since the 1967 Act was passed) and the British Medical Association are among the many organisations which oppose such restrictions.

The Bill sets out to encourage 'conscientious objection' by doctors and nurses — although there is no evidence that at present medical staff are forced to do abortions against their will. This could enable Area Health Authorities to justify inadequate abortion facilities by claiming staff are 'unsympathetic'. Until now, inadequacies of the Health Services have been made good by the charitable sector, in particular the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, who provide advice, counselling and low-cost abortions on a non profit-making basis. Now Corrie's Bill seeks to make it illegal for one organisation to provide advice *as well as* abortion facilities. There have been suggestions that BPAS and PAS behave unethically, encouraging women to have abortions so that they can take their money. However, these are plainly ridiculous. All their staff are paid on a sessional basis, and their pay is unaffected by

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the numbers of women who actually have abortions. The doctors who perform the operations in their nursing homes have no control over the numbers of patients sent to them. The charitable agencies have provided an invaluable service to many thousands of women who have been unable to obtain abortions under the NHS. Of the 56,000 women who had to turn to the private sector in 1978, 30,000 were helped by the two non-profit services. All Corrie's Bill will do is to make them less efficient and more expensive.

The only hope of defeating the Bill is a masssive display of public opposition. The TUC held a demonstration on 28 October. The National Abortion Campaign and Co-ord (the Co-ordinating Committee in Defence of the 1967 Abortion Act) will be organising other aspects of the campaign against the Bill[1]. In order to win the battle, we must understand the enemy. The Corrie Bill is not just an over-zealous attempt to 'tidy up' a 12-year-old statute. It is an attempt to deprive women of one of the most important political gains they have made this century: a measure of contrtol over their own fertility. Without that control they cannot be liberated.

JURY VETTING

> 'A jury consists of 12 individuals chosen at random from the appropriate panel. A juror should be excused if he is personally concerned in the facts of the particular case, or closely connected with a party to the proceedings or with a prospective witness. He may also be excused at the discretion of the judge on grounds of personal hardship or conscientious objection to jury service. It is contrary to established practice for jurors to be excused on more general grounds such as race, religion or political beliefs or occupation'.

This is not a despairing submission by defence counsel in some recent case. It is a practice direction made by the Lord Chief Justice in 1973 after consultation with most of the judges of the High Court. It followed the decision of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, to remove the jurors' occupations from the published jury list, a decision which followed the string of acquittals of the builders' flying pickets at Mold Crown Court and immediately preceded the conviction of Des Warren and others at Shrewsbury.

What was happening in the political trials of the early 1970s was that judges were starting to accede to defence submissions that jurors should be questioned in general terms by the judge so as to establish whether they had any strong feelings about the issues in the case. This was done, for example, at the start of the Angry Brigade trial. The removal of jurors' occupations from the list and the practice direction were intended to put a stop to what was seen at that time by the authorities as an unfair advantage for the defence.

However, in 1978 the Labour Attorney-General Sam Silkin confirmed that private jury vetting had been going on for many years on the part of the prosecution. The point about jury vetting is this. Any juror can ask the judge on various recognised grounds to be released from jury service: the juror states the ground in open court and the judge decides whether it is sufficient. But quite apart from the power of the judge to excuse jurors, both prosecuton and defence have a right to challenge them. The defence can today challenge three jurors without giving a reason, but must then 'show cause', which means calling evidence to prove that for one reason or another the juror is disqualified from serving. The prosecution also has the right to challenge jurors, but again only 'for cause'. Historically, however, they have been granted the indulgence of being allowed to tell jurors whom they propose to challenge to 'stand by for the Crown'; if a full jury is then sworn, the jurors who have been stood by remain off the jury; but if the whole panel of available jurors is exhausted by the various challenges, stand-bys and excuses, those who have been 'stood by' for the Crown are brought back and the Crown must then make its challenge good in the same way as the defence, by showing cause.

Now for centuries it was established and accepted that, apart from formal legal disqualifications, the only things which amounted to good cause for challenging a juror were that he or (in recent years) she could be shown by something they had said or done to be personally biased in relation to the prosecutor, the defendant or a witness, or possibly in relation to the charges on the indictment. There are many old cases in which defence challenges on the ground of the juror's background or general views have been ruled invalid. In other words, what the law has always insisted on — and it has to be said that the steps taken in the early 1970s were in line with this — is a jury of twelve qualified people, warts, prejudices and all, to listen to the evidence and to hammer out a verdict privately amongst themselves. The recent introduction of majority verdicts reinforces this approach, enabling ten or more jurors to outvote the obstinate one or two.

Apart from personal bias, all the disqualifications from jury service are set out in the Juries Act 1974. Judges, lawyers, clergymen and mental patients are declared ineligible, and anyone who has served a prison sentence in the last ten years or at any time has been sentenced to a jail term of five years or more is automatically disqualified.

The Juries Act gives anyone concerned a right to see the panel (that is the list) from which the jury will be drawn, in advance of the trial. No doubt the purpose is to allow checks on eligibility and disqualification to be made. But when Parliament has expressly laid down, for example, what kind of criminal record is to disqualify a citizen from serving on a jury, how can there be any

[1]National Abortion Campaign, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 (01-278 0153): Co-ord, 27-35 Mortimer Street, London W1 (01-580 9360).

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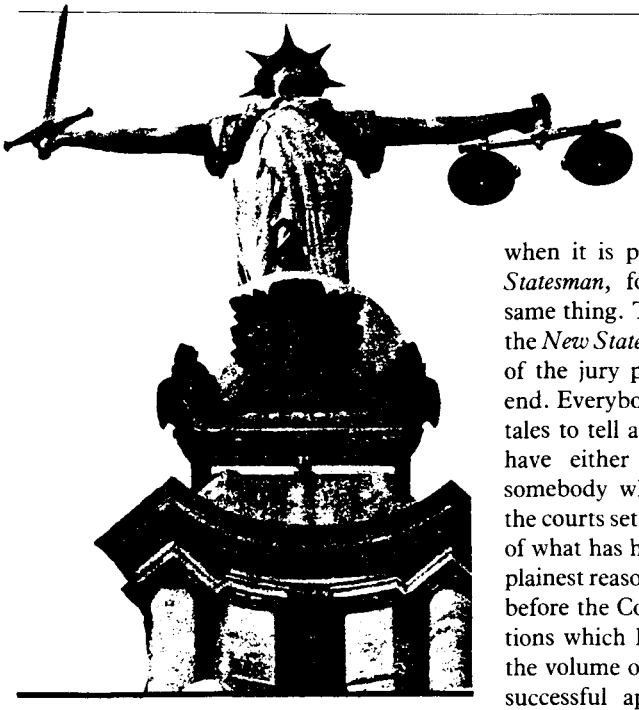

justification for either side exercising its right to challenge a juror for cause on the ground that his or her record contains some lesser criminal offence which does not disqualify them in law?

Nevertheless, when in October 1978 the Attorney-General issued a public statement on jury vetting, it turned out that with the aim of 'producing an unbiased jury', checks were going to continue to be made not only through the Criminal Record Office but also with Special Branch records and with local CID officers 'to ascertain if a potential juror is known to be an associate of an accused or of those known to be sympathetic or antagonistic to his cause'. Some of the statement is directed to preventing professional criminals getting at jurors, and some of it is concerned with official secrets cases. But there is no check which can reliably identify the weak vessels on the jury panel in this regard, and the checks that are made will instead not only constitute a serious invasion of jurors' privacy but will encourage the keeping of the sort of police records which are already known to exist — that is, not only criminal records but records of acquittals, unverified accusations, complaints made against the police, and damaging gossip. The fact that this information is supposed to be furnished to the defence makes the matter worse, if anything, by making the defence accomplices in what may very well be an unlawful exercise. For this reason the defence in the current trial of alleged anarchists not only objected to the vetting of jurors, but finally refused to accept the prosecution's list of 'findings' about them.

It is ironic that the Crown is now systematically establishing a power to interfere in this way with the integrity of juries at a time when it is prosecuting a journal, the *New Statesman*, for allegedly doing exactly the same thing. The ostensible difference is that the *New Statesman* interfered at the other end of the jury process — the decision-making end. Everybody who has served on a jury has tales to tell about it, and most people today have either served on a jury or know somebody who has done so. Nevertheless, the courts set their face against any disclosure of what has happened in the jury room. The plainest reason is that if evidence could be put before the Court of Appeal of the considerations which had led some juries to convict, the volume of appeals and the proportion of successful appeals would escalate beyond control. For this reason, no doubt, the authorities are unanimous about the need to keep the lid on the jury box, however many doubts they may have — as evidenced by recent *Telegraph* and *Observer* editorials — about letting the police guard the entrance to it.

NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT

The Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, which took place in Havana at the beginning of September was, without doubt, an outstanding conference.

Attended by no less than 94 independent states and national liberation movements, compared with 25 at the first non-aligned summit in Belgrade in 1961, it was the biggest assembly of non-aligned and national liberation leaders ever held.

Recent events in the region such as the successful revolution in Nicaragua, the establishment of new, anti-imperialist governments in Jamaica, Grenada, St. Lucia and Dominica, the winning of concessions from the United States by Panama in connection with the future of the Canal, and developments in Mexico, Bolivia and Ecuador, along with the upsurge of struggle in El Salvador, all underline the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean have entered a new phase of battle.

The Havana non-aligned summit was also the first such to be held in Cuba — and this fact, together with the final decison to elect Fidel Castro as chairman of the movement for the next three years, is an expression of the enhanced prestige enjoyed by Cuba among the developing countries. Cuba's progress as a socialist country, her attractive pull in Latin America, her refusal to be intimidated by US imperialism, only 90 miles away, and her internationalism expressed, for example, in the way she helped Angola to defeat the invasion from South Africa, has given Cuba a unique position among the non-aligned countries.

Right from the start of the preparations the capitalist press speculated that there would be divisions at the summit and possibly a complete split. The media did its best to play off Cuba against Yugoslavia, and Fidel Castro against Tito. In doing so they tried to exploit the misunderstandings that exist in the West concerning the nature of the non-aligned movement.

Some progressive people consider that the non-aligned movement is an abandonment of principles, a refusal to distinguish between imperialism and anti-imperialism. They equate it with neutrality — and for this reason were more ready to be confused by the debates that preceded the recent non-aligned summit and that were resolved at the summit itself.

Even amongst Communists there are misunderstandings and differences in assessment regarding the role of the non-aligned movement. The fact remains, however, that when the Communist Parties of all Europe, including both the Soviet and Yugoslav Parties, as well as those from Western Europe, met in conference in Berlin in June 1976, they had no doubt as to the historic significance and positive role of the movement of non-aligned countries. The final declaration of that conference, endorsed by all present, characterised the non-aligned movement as 'one of the most important factors in world politics', and pointed out the significant role which it plays in the fight for peace and detente, to establish a just system of international political and economic relations, and in the struggle against 'imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and all forms of domination and exploitation'.

Despite these clear indications of a consistent line represented by the non-aligned movement since is foundation, debate arose over some questions, such as the participation of Egypt in the light of the Camp David Agreement, and the question of Kampuchean representation. These matters were resolved by leaving them for subsequent examination.

It was not surprising that such questions should have occasioned sharp controversy. After all, between the 5th and 6th Summits there had been tension and even armed conflict between a number of non-aligned countries including in South-East Asia (Vietnam/Kampuchea under the Pol Pot regime), and in Africa (Somalia/Ethiopia and

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Tanzania/Uganda), as well as the bitter reaction of Arab states to Egypt's acceptance of the Camp David Agreement.

Debate also surfaced, perhaps more significantly, over the relationship between the movement and the Soviet Union and other socialist countries not members of the non-aligned movement. There were arguments as to how to present this question in the Summit documents. However, agreement was reached, and final formulations accepted which reaffirmed the basic purposes of the non-aligned movement.

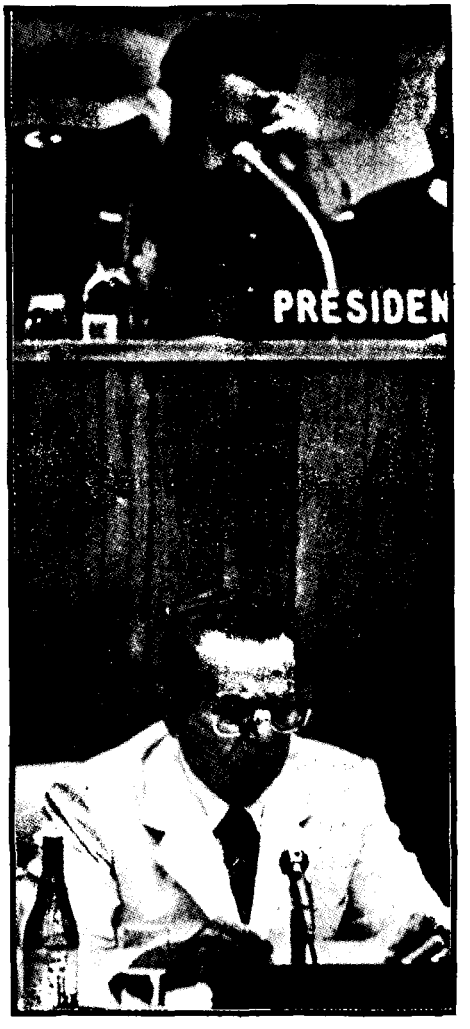
This should not be taken to mean that the movement regards itself as 'equidistant' from the Soviet Union and the United States. Nor that a negative attitude is taken towards the Soviet Union.

In the *Borba* interview mentioned above, Tito stated: 'Our position is not one of equidistance nor of *a priori* condemnation'.

In practice, however, on the big questions of peace, colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and all forms of domination, the non-aligned movement finds that its position is very similar to that of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. As the *Financial Times* commented after the Havana summit 'The non-aligned movement — despite its name — does not necessarily take a neutral stand between the two power blocs. The Soviet Union, whatever Europeans and Americans think about Soviet multi-national territories and relations with Eastern Europe, is not tarred with the colonial brush'. (13th September, 1971).

In his opening address, and expressing Cuba's point of view, Fidel Castro declared:

> 'We are grateful to the glorious October Revolution because it ushered in a new era in human history, made it possible to defeat fascism and created a world situation in which the peoples' self-sacrificing struggle led to the downfall of the hateful colonial system. To ignore that is to ignore history itself.
>
> Not only Cuba but also Vietnam; the Arab countries under attack; the peoples in the former Portuguese colonies; the revolutionary processes in many other countries throughout the world; and the liberation movement that fights against oppression, racism, Zionism and fascism in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Palestine and elsewhere owe a debt of gratitude to socialist solidarity. I wonder whether the United States or any other NATO country has ever helped a single liberation movement anywhere in the world. In fact, I am convinced — and I have said so on other occasions — that, without the power and influence which the socialist community exerts today, imperialism, harassed by the economic crisis and by the shortage of basic raw materials, would not hesitate to divide the world up again'.



It is understandable that Fidel Castro should have presented his country's position in this forthright way. After all, as Fidel himself has made clear many times, the Cuban people conducted their own revolution but they could not have maintained it, carried through their substantial economic and social programme and defended themselves against US imperialism without the many-sided aid of the Soviet Union, and without the change in the world balance of forces which the emergence of the socialist countries has helped to bring about.

It is equally understandable that Tito, bearing in mind Yugoslavia's very different history and experience, should have placed his emphasis differently.

Despite such differences in presentation of the role of the non-aligned movement and its relationship to the Soviet Union and other non-member socialist countries, agreement was finally reached on the conference documents because the participants were aware that their common interests overrode their differences.

One should bear in mind that the 100-odd countries in the non-aligned movement range right across the political spectrum — from socialist Cuba, Vietnam and Yugoslavia to Jordan under King Hussein, Nepal under King Birenda, as well as Kuwait, Pakistan, Indonesia and other states under arbitrary government. It is of historic importance that such an array of states, with such differing systems and state policies, should nevertheless have been able to come together and find common ground. And it was necessary, at the summit, that no formulations should be pressed that would alienate many countries from the movement and disrupt its unity.

Yet it would be wrong to ignore the role of the socialist states or to misjudge its relationship to the non-aligned movement. In practice, it is not so much a question whether or not the non-aligned countries should ally themselves with the Warsaw Treaty bloc. Rather, that the major initiatives and policy positions adopted by the non-aligned movement are supported by the socialist countries since both groupings are pursuing policies against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and are striving for peace, detente and disarmament. And these great purposes stand out although differences have arisen, and will no doubt arise again in the future, on this or that particular problem.

Thus is was that the *Financial Times* (13th September 1979) felt it appropriate to headline its final report on the summit: 'Non-aligned nations forge a new unity'.

In his closing speech, Fidel Castro, speaking in the light of the debates that had taken place during the conference, said:

> 'Our enemies predicted there would be a split, predicted that the 6th summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries would explode like a grenade. They were taking into account what has been so often said and repeated: that we are a Movement of very heterogeneous countries, with many a reef in our path. Nevertheless, we overcame the reefs, we have dealt with the most difficult problems and we have reached agreements on each one by almost unanimous consensus. As a result, we can say — we can even proclaim — that our movement is more united than ever!'

No one would pretend that all problems are solved. Nor that, in pursuit of their own state and party objectives, different leaders of the non-aligned countries will not express differences in their presentation as well as in particular policy matters.

But a new unity has been forged. The non-aligned movement has become more powerful. And its weight will increasingly be brought to bear in the interests of peace and national liberation.

Contributors

Anna Coote Stephen Sedley
Jack Woddis

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The Decline of the Conservative Party

Andrew Gamble

I

In May 1955 the Conservatives won 334 seats in the House of Commons; in May 1979 they won 339 — giving them very similar overall majorities of around forty seats. In the intervening period, however, both the position of the Conservatives within British politics and the character of the party had greatly changed. The previous twenty-four years had seen a dramatic decline in the electoral fortunes and political confidence of the Conservatives, and the rise of a new radical right within the party which, though it does not dominate, has come to supply a good deal of the party's rhetoric, as well as some of its leaders, including the leader herself. This new political tendency, often labelled Thatcherism, is a response to the major changes that have transformed the British state and British politics in recent years; the decline of Britain as an imperial state; the decline of the British national economy relative to other developed capitalist economies; the onset of a new world recession after an unprecedented period of expansion; and the decline of the Conservatives as the automatic governing party.

It might seem eccentric to argue on the morrow of a decisive Conservative election victory that the Conservatives are in decline, but in historical perspective it remains true. The Conservatives used to dominate British politics; between 1885 and 1975 they were in office either alone or in coalition for sixty out of the ninety years — between 1885 and 1945 for forty-five out of the sixty. In the past fifteen years, however, their electoral performance has been much worse than this, and in the two elections in 1974 their vote sank to 37.9% and 35.8% of the poll. The October figure represented only 25% of the electorate, and was the lowest percentage polled by the Conservatives this century. It was brought about not by any great electoral swing to the left (the Labour Party's support was almost as low), but by the loss of support in two regions of the UK — Ulster and Scotland — and by a tremendous upsurge in the Liberal vote in England. The combined vote of the two major parties was reduced to 75% of the vote (50% of the electorate), although they still picked up well over 90% of the seats.

In 1979 the Conservative share of the vote recovered to 43.9%, but this was still lower than in 1970, and much lower than in the victories of the 1950s; (in 1955 the Conservative share was 49.7%). The regional loss of support was not reversed. The party has been unable to renew the alliance with its former supporters in Ulster, whilst in Scotland the Conservatives even experienced a small swing against them. The party's strength is constructed overwhelmingly in southern England. Conservative seats in North Britain have fallen from 111 in 1955 to 78 in 1979 (Labour's seats have increased from 126 to 151); in the South the Conservatives have increased their number of seats from 223 to 261 whilst Labour seats have fallen from 151 to 118. Furthermore, the Liberal vote although it has fallen back remains at the very high level of 14%. Like all governments since the war the new Conservative government is very much a minority government, elected on the votes of only one in three of those eligible to vote; hardly a watershed election, and only a partial step back towards regaining the party's former electoral dominance.

Why the Historic Decline?

What underlines the historical decline of the Conservatives' electoral fortunes are two main developments — firstly, the weakening of the

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party's image as the party of nation and national institutions; secondly, its weakening as the party of good government and the national economy. The party developed in the era of the mass electorate as the party of the Union, the Empire and the Constitution. It was as the party of the State, the Establishment, and the Land, rather than as the party of Capital that the Conservatives competed for votes, and this enabled them at times to play a mediating role between capital and labour, though rather less often than party mythology suggests. The Empire, however, has now gone, the Constitution is in disarray, (the present Lord Chancellor has even described it as producing an elective dictatorship), and the Union is unsteady, with new nationalist forces endeavouring to break the centralised control exercised from the metropolitan heartland in the south of England. At the same time the full integration of the Labour Party into the state since 1940 has weakened the Conservatives' claim to be the sole defender of national interests, a claim still further harmed by the transformation of the party into the party of the EEC.

For twenty years now the party has generally lacked the kind of national issues and national causes which it used to such effect to rally a substantial section of working class and trade unionist support behind it. Britain's steady decline as a world power has affected the confidence not only of the governing class, but of its solid support in the working class — and since the working class makes up such a large majority of the electorate in Britain, no party can hope to win an election without winning a large measure of support from workers and trade unionists (the Conservatives normally receive half their votes from manual workers and their families).

The party developed in the era of the mass electorate as the party of the Union, the Empire and the Constitution.

The Party Prospects and Good Government?

As the themes of patriotism and national greatness have dimmed, the Conservatives have come to rely more on their instrumental appeal to the working class — that they are the party of prosperity and good government, which knows how to manage the national economy: 'Life's better under the Conservatives: don't let Labour ruin it', as the famous 1959 election poster proclaimed. This approach appeared to pay handsomely in the 1950s, when the Conservatives presided over an economy comfortably afloat in the backwash created by the boom in the world economy. In the last twenty years, however, the problem of the relative decline of the British economy and the steady worsening of Britain's economic problems, particularly since the deepening world recession after 1974, have made all British governments appear powerless. Since 1959 no government after serving a full term has been re-elected — the pendulum has swung four times. Support as measured by opinion polls and by-elections has fluctuated violently, which contrasts markedly with the period from 1945 to 1959 (the first time a government lost a by-election was in 1957), and is partly the result of the succession of economic crises over which governments have presided and their apparent inability to reverse Britain's economic decline and restore national confidence. This has hit both major parties hard, and led to a considerable weakening of the two party system and the national authority of governments. The Conservatives have particularly suffered from their spell in office from 1970-74, which saw four states of emergency, an unprecedented post-war level of industrial conflict, high unemployment, high inflation, and the spectacular shipwreck of the Government's attempt to expand the economy, amidst the oil crisis, the miners' strike, and the 3 day week.

After that experience and the earlier one between 1960 and 1964, the Conservatives could no longer very plausibly claim to be the party of prosperity and successful economic management. They were further handicapped by having moved from being the party of Empire and protection to becoming the party of free trade and Europe. The Conservatives were finding it increasingly difficult to project themselves as the defenders of the national economy since so much of domestic capital had made their operations international and powerfully reinforced the traditional pressure from the City for free movement of goods and capital.

II

It is against this background of declining political and electoral fortunes that the rise of Thatcherism must be seen. The last twenty years have produced major debates and rifts within the party to such an extent that the Conservatives are well on the way to becoming a party of ideology and doctrine, the very things that were so derided in their political opponents. They have normally prided themselves on their unity and the absence of factions and splits, a fact which makes the Conservative Party very different from many mass parties of the right elsewhere, such as the Italian Christian Democrats. The new preoccupation of the party with ideological debate precedes the current recession but has been enormously amplified by it.

The New Right

When the Conservatives were in Opposition between 1964 and 1970, a New Right took shape in the party which was distinct from the traditional right (although membership often overlapped) in so far as it drew its strength from a rejection of the consensus around social democratic values and objectives that had been established ever since the wartime coalition. The new Right is the seedbed from which Thatcherism has grown, and is composed of two rather different strands. There is on the one hand the revival of liberal political economy and the promulgation to the concept of the social market economy, which seeks the abandonment of Keynesianism and many kinds of government intervention; on the other hand, there is a new populism — the focusing on issues like immigration, crime and punishment, strikes, social security abuse, and permissiveness. These two elements have been energetically explored by a great variety of new right wing pressure groups and organisations that have been germinating like dragons teeth for the last fifteen years. The gospel of the new economic liberalism which has become so fashionable in the form of monetarism, is assiduously spread by the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Centre for Policy Studies (founded by Thatcher and Joseph in 1974) and by leader writers and commentators in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Times*[1]. The populist right has spawned (in addition to the National Front itself), the Monday Club, the National Association for Freedom, as well as broader cultural organisations like SPUC and Mary Whitehouse's Listeners' and Viewers' Association.

Such organisations have succeeded in tapping majority opinion on many issues and recruiting considerable numbers of activists. The target is social democracy; not just the party and organisations of social democracy, but also the acceptance of social democratic goals and policies by Conservative governments since the war. In the eyes of the New Right the Conservative leadership has constantly betrayed Conservative principles by never 'putting the clock back a single second', so acquiescing in the relentless drive towards collectivism and the destruction of economic liberty — the prelude to the loss of political freedom. The groundswell of New Right opinion, so critical

[1] I have examined this social market doctrine in an essay in the forthcoming *Socialist Register 1979*: 'The Free Economy and the Strong State'.

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of the social democratic state and much of the record of Conservative governments, has made internal party management increasingly difficult. If the Conservatives had not been able to contain these new popular forces, they would have spilled outside into new parties and organisations. Given the lack of formal democracy within the Conservative Party, the emphasis on deference, and the insulation of the leadership from rank and file pressure, the mechanism for shifting the balance in the party towards the ideological militants has been the espousal of these new ideas and attitudes by leading Conservatives. Enoch Powell played the crucial role here, and Margaret Thatcher has followed in his path. Without 'Powellism', 'Thatcherism' would not have had the same opportunity.

Traditional Toryism

The Conservative leadership, however, remains as a body firmly Tory. The adherents of the new populism and the exponents of social market doctrine remain a minority even in the new Cabinet, although the latter are concentrated in the crucial economic ministries (Howe, Biffen, Lawson, Joseph, Howell, Lamont). Margaret Thatcher's personal sympathy with the populist causes of the New Right and with social market doctrine is undoubted, but she heads a party where the traditional Tory attitude to government is very strong and populist movements make little headway.

This attitude may be summed up as governing according to circumstances rather than principles, making careful assessment of the political balance between classes and interests, being prepared to make concessions where necessary, and only pursuing those lines of action for which support can be won and which do not threaten the security of the state. Since 1940 this has meant governing within the limits imposed by social democracy, using government powers to promote full employment and prosperity, accepting a considerable public sector alongside the private, financing high government spending on welfare out of high taxation, and conciliating trade union power. The 1950s saw the Conservatives presiding over a booming economy, strikes were 'withering away', ideology was near its end, Keynesianism was said to have solved the problem of unemployment and depression, and the new political and social stability of capitalism seemed assured.

It is hardly surprising that many Conservative leaders who experienced that period are reluctant to forgo the political style and political strategy that was developed at the time with such mastery by Harold Macmillan. The prospect of policies that seek to dismantle social democracy by 'rolling back' the state in economic affairs, and rolling it forward to confront trade union power, fills many of the present Conservative leadership (Gilmour, Pym, Prior, Carlisle, Walker, and Whitelaw among them) with alarm. They still hope to find ways that will at least contain the conflicts and alleviate the problems that surround government policy, without embracing measures the effect of which are incalculable for the security and legitimacy of the state.

III

Whereas the Tory style is to govern in the light of circumstances, the Thatcher style is to govern according to principles. The difference is well illustrated by considering the character of Edward Heath's leadership. Heath was a Tory, reared in a Tory tradition and one of

For twenty years now the party has generally lacked the kind of national issues which it used to such effect.

Macmillan's principal lieutenants. The period of his leadership was often stormy, because the pressure from the New Right in the party mounted inexorably, and Powell chose to directly challenge the leadership and its political strategy. There is no doubt that the Selsdon Park conference in 1970 and the manifesto that followed it showed many concessions to the weight of New Right opinion. It is also true that the early period of the Heath government is often seen as marking a sharp break with consensus politics and as a harbinger of Thatcherism — no help for lame ducks, tax reductions to increase incentives, public expenditure cuts and new charges from museums to school milk; the sale of nationalised industry assets; the abolition of interventionist agencies like the Prices and Income Board and the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation; and the legislation to reform trade union law..

The Heath Government

But many of these changes fell far short of a social market strategy. The Government was radical and prepared to be radical in a way that no government since the war had been. This was radicalism, however, in pursuit of the central objective of the post war social democratic state — a prosperous national economy. The Heath Government, after the frustrations and the failures of Labour's administration, experimented with measures to make the economy more efficient and productive without questioning the real fundamentals of social democracy or Keynesianism. It continued to fund high levels of welfare spending and to accept responsibility for the level of unemployment and the rate of growth. Even the trade union reform was aimed primarily at strengthening the control of permanent officials over shop stewards with the intention of aiding their further involvement with the management of the economy, rather than reducing their powers and their effectiveness as organisations. When these 'liberal' policies did not work, and unemployment mounted while output remained stagnant, and industrial conflict erupted, the Heath Government had no qualms about executing its notorious U-turns, returning to the measures of its discredited predecessor, only making them more interventionist than before. They included a statutory prices and income policy; an Industry Act that gave sweeping powers of intervention to the government, and a fiscal and monetary policy that gave rise to the great Barber boom.

Barber's boom should not be regarded as a cynical promotion of City interests by creating the enormous boom in property and secondary banks (although this was one unintended effect). It was rather a bold and desperate attempt by the Conservatives, under considerable political and electoral pressure, to break out of the cycle of stop-go, stagnation and inflation, and establish a much more prosperous and faster growing economy which would fund the

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welfare and social programmes demanded by the electorate as well as the real wage increases demanded by the trade unions. The Conservatives have always been more expansionist and fiscally irresponsible than Labour, partly out of necessity. Heath's famous outburst against the shortcomings of British capital revealed the increasing exasperation of a Conservative government which, working within the constraints of social democracy, found it could not rely on the cooperation of its class allies. In the speech to the institute of Directors Heath declared:

> 'When we came in we were told there weren't sufficient inducements to invest. So we provided the inducements. Then we were told people were scared of balance of payments difficulties leading to stop-go. So we floated the pound. Then we were told of fears of inflation: and now we're dealing with that. And still you aren't investing enough!'

After Heath

The dash for growth by the Heath government may prove to be the last of its kind for some time. The collapse of the boom and the crisis in the world economy were followed by two Conservative defeats in 1974, and plunged the party into deep gloom about its prospects and its performance. Like many political parties the Conservatives forgive most things except failure, and 1974 was a failure particularly bitter because it followed the apparent reversal of the new course which Powell and the new Right had demanded and on which the party had ostensibly been elected in 1970. The argument that the Heath government had betrayed Conservative principles by its changes of policy was forcibly expressed by Powell, who managed to vote against the Government whilst still holding the Conservative Whip on no fewer than 113 occasions between 1970 and 1974. But Powell was no longer available after February 1974 to reap the whirlwind whose seeds he had helped to sow. Denouncing the pretext for calling the election as fradulent he resigned his seat, and subsequently moved to the political periphery of UK politics by standing for an Ulster constituency in the Unionist interest. Thus the Conservatives lost the chance of choosing as their leader the one figure so far thrown up by the New Right of unquestioned political genius. The challenge to Heath was instead led first by Keith Joseph (falteringly), then by Margaret Thatcher, the most inexperienced Conservative politician to become leader since Bonar Law. With some help from the backbenchers' 1922 Committee who were antagonistic to Heath (Du Cann was Chairman) and drew up the rules for the contest, Thatcher won mainly because she ably exploited the gulf that had opened up between Conservative principles and Conservative performance. By articulating one of the traditional ideologies of the party — the free market and individual responsibility — she provided a rallying point for all those dissatisfied for varying reasons with Heath's leadership. It was a victory for the backbenchers — only one of Heath's Shadow Cabinet is definitely known to have voted for her. But it did not result from a great upsurge of the party rank and file, for which no channels existed. Thatcher does not owe her position to her support in the party organisation or to any other extra parliamentary interests. Her characteristic approach to politics is to indulge in populistic simiplification of complex issues, but she is not a representative of a 'Poujadist' current in the party. She has never attempted to enlist mass support outside Parliament in the way that Powell has, and her route to the leadership of the Conservatives was entirely orthodox.

IV

Since Thatcher's elevation the party has been more divided than at any time since the 1930s. Some of Heath's most prominent supporters like Peter Walker were purged from the Shadow Cabinet, many more from the party bureaucracy. But Thatcher still presided over a Shadow Cabinet dominated by the Tory wing of the party and the supporters of Heath. The manner of her victory made it impossible that it should be otherwise. Despite the ideological noise surrounding her leadership, she moved extremely cautiously in promoting those like Winston Churchill and Rhodes Boyson with whom she has most in common.

Whereas the Tory style is to govern in the light of circumstances, the Thatcher style is to govern according to principles.

A Fundamental Reorientation

At the same time a fundamental reorientation of Conservative policy and attitudes has been taking place, but aided as much by the measures being forced on capitalist governments as they struggle to cope with the impact of the world recession on their national economies, as by the swing to the right in the party. Even after the first battery of measures that have been announced, it is much too soon to assess fully the character of the new Government and the direction of its policy, but a few things do already stand out.

As Stuart Hall recently argued in this journal, there has been a long period of preparation for the new kind of national consensus the Conservative Right wishes to see. The institutions, policies, organisation, and values of social democracy have come under sustained attack during the past fifteen years. A powerful intellectual case has been worked out for breaking with Keynesianism and rebuilding the foundations of the market order, re-establishing the principle that the government is not responsible for economic outcomes but only for maintaining sound money, free competition, and the security of property and contract. Such a principle would wipe out many of the gains made by the labour movement during and immediately after the war. The Forward March of Labour would not just be halted — Labour would be in headlong retreat. .

The strength of Thatcherism as an ideology is its ability to translate the themes of economic liberalism and the social market economy into slogans and ideas that tap the popular discontent with many aspects of the present state, drawing on the great reservoir of authoritarian attitudes and opinions in the population, and establishing the stereotypes that can be broadcast and hammered home through the popular press and the media. They include the inefficiencies and arbitrary decisions of bureaucracies and the nationalised industries; the burden of taxation; welfare scroungers; the 'privileges' enjoyed by immigrants; the disorder created by strikes and demonstrations; the

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corruption of the young by permissive attitudes towards education, pornography, violence, crime and vandalism.

Powell and Thatcher

The key to the translation is the posing of all questions of government policy as problems of individual responsibility and individual choice. This is the populist ideology of self-help, which preaches the right to be unequal and the need for self-reliance, and for everyone to take responsibility for themselves and their families. It is then skilfully allied to the calls for strong measures to discipline and control strikers, muggers, students, vandals, dope peddlers, gipsies, immigrants, and any other group that looks like disturbing the peace. Powell by contrast chose to stress the importance of rediscovering nationhood and rebuilding national pride, and tried to construct a populist platform around the issues of immigration, the EEC, and Ulster.

This contrast suggests a difference of major proportions between Powell and Thatcher, which may in part explain Powell's hostile reaction to the first Thatcher budget and his continued bitter estrangement from his former party. Powell did attempt to change British politics by seeking to mobilise popular, nationalist movement in the working class, directed against many Establishment institutions and policies. Thatcher, however, does not seek to foster resentments against, for example, the EEC, because the economic liberalism she favours is corporate liberalism. There is to be no question of acting against the interests of corporate capital — as withdrawal from the EEC would certainly be. The aim is rather to make the British economy safer and more attractive for multinational capital.

> Since Thatcher's elevation the party has been more divided than at any time since the 1930s.

V

The central dilemma for Thatcherism is that it threatens to run up against the major problem of Conservative parties everywhere — reconciling the way in which support is won and mobilised with the constraints on policy in government. Using populist slogans and the simple-minded morality of economic individualism when in opposition to drive Labour onto the defensive and win back part of the lost working class support, raises expectations that are impossible to fulfil in government. This does not imply that implementing the Conservatives' social market strategy for the economy will encounter insuperable difficulties, but it does mean that the policies may well turn out to have consequences different from the ones that their proponents expect. For a social market economy to be realised in Britain some major changes in the direction of economic policy would have to occur. The easiest area is probably control of the money supply, since so much of the ground, in the shape of monetary targets and cash limits, has been prepared by the Labour government. The problem in Britain, however, is that if the new Government were to perform even as well as the last in the eyes of the financial markets, it will be forced to pursue policies that are on balance deflationary. Maintaining a low rate of inflation and a surplus on the balance of payments will make necessary a very tight money policy. This is because, in the circumstances of the current world recession, the British balance of payments is continuing to deteriorate at a rate that will more than wipe out the benefit from North Sea oil and the opportunity which the oil would otherwise have provided for running the economy at a higher level of demand. This means that in order to preserve the trade balance, the Government will be forced into measures that will cause steadily rising unemployment and very little increase in living standards. Since no rescue can be expected from a new boom in the world economy (the most obvious difference with the 1950s which Conservatives so eager to proclaim the dawn of a new era of 'setting the people free' are strangely blind to), the only policy that currently makes sense for a government which wants to preserve capitalism in Britain and continue to preside over its fortunes, is that advocated by the Cambridge Economic Policy Group for quantitative import controls, which by relaxing the balance of payments constraint on internal expansion of demand would permit governments to run the economy at a much higher rate of growth. Despite the formidable obstacles of American and EEC opposition and the Government's own free trade principles, this may yet prove a course of action which the Conservatives will be forced to adopt. It looks a much more likely 'U-turn' for this government than a reversion to statutory income policies or intervention in industry.

Rolling Back the State

If the management of the money supply to control inflation, to which the new Government attaches the highest importance, is likely to prove deflationary, still greater weight will have to be attached to other parts of the programme. The rolling back of the state to provide the cuts in direct taxes that are expected to re-invigorate the ranks of the producers of wealth, will have to be that much the more spectacular. 3p off income tax, a war on waste in government expenditure, and the abolition of numerous Quangos will not suffice. The timidity of the manifesto and the ambiguities of the policy documents issued in opposition are not good signs for the zealots of the social market economy. Every government declares itself against waste, but reducing waste alone makes little impact. What is required are decisions to shift whole services like health and road building or firefighting out of the public sector altogether. This government may experiment rather more than its predecessor with hiving off certain services, but they still seem unlikely to take the plunge and start the wholesale dismantling of the public sector. Direct contact with the public agencies which have been built up to cope with the practical problems of capitalist development will temper the refoming zeal of the new Cabinet.

If public expenditure could be slashed then incentives could be enormously increased, and this might lead to a new flowering of entrepreneurship in Britain. The ageing and slothful capitalist class would be rejuvenated by new recruits quick to see ways of exploiting opportunities in the much freer market economy. Such a chain of reasoning initially motivated the last Conservative government, as we have seen, but the only detectable flourishing of entrepreneurship took place in the fringe banks of the great secondary bank boom of

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> The aim is rather to make the British economy safer and more attractive for multinational capital.

1971-4 (many are now of course in the hands of the receiver).

Social market doctrine holds that economic prosperity is no concern of the government, and if once the free market has been restored and government activities reduced to a minimum, the outcome of individual decisions is not prosperity, then the fault lies with the society not the government. Unfortunately for this elegant argument of Thatcher's entourage, a Conservative government cannot afford such a long-term view, being faced with short-term elections. Although individuals as agents in the market may not have 'combined' to make the economy grow, as voters they will blame the government for not ensuring that the economy did grow in any case. The achievement of prosperity is an expectation still firmly rooted in the mass of the population, and for governments merely to disclaim responsibility for the level of unemployment or living standards may be realistic in the face of the recession and the weakness of the British economy, but is not a credible basis on which to retain popular support. Populism may boomerang then.

Despite North Sea Oil the weakness of the British economy is much greater than in the last great recession in the 1930s. This makes the constraints much tighter on government action. It is of course quite possible for Conservative governments to continue along the lines established by the last Labour government maintaining a low profile deflationary policy and hoping to ride through the storms ahead. But they are unlikely to be warmly rewarded by the electorate for their endeavours, and a further weakening of the two-party system will probably take place, caused initially by a new and massive surge of support for the Liberals who have always done well under Conservative governments and badly under Labour.

Even Bolder Political Initiatives?

Much bolder initiatives are required by either party in government if they are to break out of the trap created by the expectations of the electorate, the relative decline of the economy, the strength of the trade unions, and the international orientation of private capital. For the Conservatives, the social market strategy of Thatcherism would only have a chance of success if they felt able to tackle the social force that stands as the main obstacle to the realisation of the social market economy — the organised working class. Monetarism by itself only restores sound money. The Industrial Relations Act was a moderate measure compared to what would be needed — the withdrawal of the legal immunities granted since 1906; the training of specialised strike-breaking forces; the making of all labour contracts enforceable at law.

If a Conservative government were prepared to do this and back the introduction of the authoritarian measures and the increase in the state's powers that would be necessary, then it is possible that the political balance could be swung so far in favour of capital that Britain became a profitable site for industrial investment once more; and capitalism could be placed on secure national foundations once again. But given the power and influence of multinational capital in Britain, and the simultaneous moves in the Budget to raise the interest rates (so attracting idle hot money into London whilst increasing the costs of domestic investment) *and* to relax exchange controls (so encouraging British industrial companies to continue to ship plant and resources out of Britain) it is more likely that a Thatcher Government will shy away from a decisive confrontation and opt for deflation, high unemployment in the regions, and the rentier life. The key question then becomes how other forces in Britain, including the labour movement, respond to that, and whether the Tory wing of the Conservative leadership will acquiesce indefinitely in a deflationary policy, or whether it will seek, when the time is right, to help reconstruct the social democratic centre in British politics by throwing its weight behind electoral reform.

Such a move would be bitterly resisted by the Thatcherite faction in the party, because it would rule out the kind of experiments and policies that they advocate. The divide within the Conservative leadership stems from the doubt as to whether British capitalism and its state are failing because of social democracy, or because the way in which social democracy has been organised up to now prevents the formulation of consistent policies on pay, union rights, and investment, and many other issues. This is one central and fundamental question for the next five years.

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The Tories' Economic Strategy

Michael Bleaney

The Conservative Party has been out of office for 11 out of the last 15 years. To misquote Harold Wilson, it has become 'the natural party of opposition'. Since 1964, the Conservatives have been searching for a political formula which would capture the mood of the electorate and place them once again in the ascendance. Under Mrs Thatcher's leadership, they appear to have found it — though whether they can retain that ascendance is another matter.

A major theme of Tory propaganda in recent years has been to roll back the frontiers of the state. In the circumstances of the late 1970s, this has emerged as an unusually effective note to sound. The appeal of state intervention has diminished, because no new ideas about how to use it to shore up the British economy have been forthcoming, from either Labour or Tory leaderships, since the mid-1960s. The only new thinking in the Labour Party has come from the left, and its proposals were rejected by the leaders. Meanwhile, as government expenditure has increased, the burden of taxation as a proportion of incomes has grown steadily over the last two decades. This was fertile ground for the seed of promised income tax cuts to fall on.

The Tory vision of a more hierarchical, authoritarian society with a reduced economic role for the state is fully reflected in their announced policy for the economy. What is less certain is how far in this direction they will actually be able or allowed to go. The present article looks in some detail at the economic policy decisions of the new government, and assesses its prospects of success. For convenience, fiscal and monetary policy, industrial policy and wages and prices policy are discussed separately. It has been impossible to avoid altogether the use of technical language current amongst economists, but I have tried to explain the terms used as clearly as possible.

FISCAL AND MONETARY POLICY

The government has direct control over some significant economic variables such as the level of its own spending, the structure of taxation and the interest rate at which it borrows money from the private sector. But it can influence important quantities such as unemployment, inflation and the balance of payments only indirectly. To change these it has to rely on the effectiveness of its fiscal and monetary policy.

The Tories laid out their fiscal and monetary policy for the next nine months in the Budget of 12 June. They have also given a fair indication of where they intend to go after that. But the Budget can only be fully understood in the context of the trends in the economy already visible at the time. By May, the signs were that the economy was moving towards a recession, which would soon be reflected in rising unemployment; the inflation rate was rising; the growth of other advanced capitalist countries was slowing down as a result of rising energy prices, thus depressing British export prospects; the current account of the balance of payments was in deficit in spite of the contribution of North Sea oil; the money supply was growing faster than the target maximum set by the outgoing Labour government; and the rise of sterling on the foreign exchange markets was provoking fears about export competitiveness.

The Tory vision of a more hierarchical, authoritarian society with a reduced role for the state is fully reflected in their announced policy for the economy.

Altogether not a very happy picture. Yet the Tories did not respond by producing a markedly expansionary Budget, increasing government expenditure relative to taxaton, even though this is the classic Keynesian remedy for boosting profits and output and taking a capitalist economy out of a recession. Why not? Most observers would agree that their Budget was noticeably deflationary, and it was followed by immediate speculation about a figure of 2 million registered unemployed by the end of 1980. If the Tories were authentic followers of Profssor Milton Friedman, they would welcome such a rise in unemployment as an effective anti-inflationary measure. They would expect that the poorer demand condition would slow down the rate of rise of both wages and prices by intensifying the competition for jobs and sales. A Friedmanite would argue that a sharp burst of unemployment is necessary to reduce inflation quickly.

But my impression is that the Tories are sceptical about such an argument: the experience of the last decade has convinced them that workers can push up wages quite fast even when unemployment is high. To counteract this they have developed a different policy based on frightening trade unionists into accepting low wages or risk losing their jobs. The key instrument here is monetary policy: the Tories will be saying to workers that, since the money supply is being kept under strict control, the higher the wages, the fewer the jobs. The point to grasp is that such a policy does not require a rise in actual unemployment (although a substantial fall would undermine it, since the threat would lose its force); it depends on the *fear* of such a rise becoming widespread amongst workers. The expected rise in unemployment in 1980 is a more or less unintended side effect of the Tories' other policies, and is in fact causing them some anxiety because of its potential political impact.

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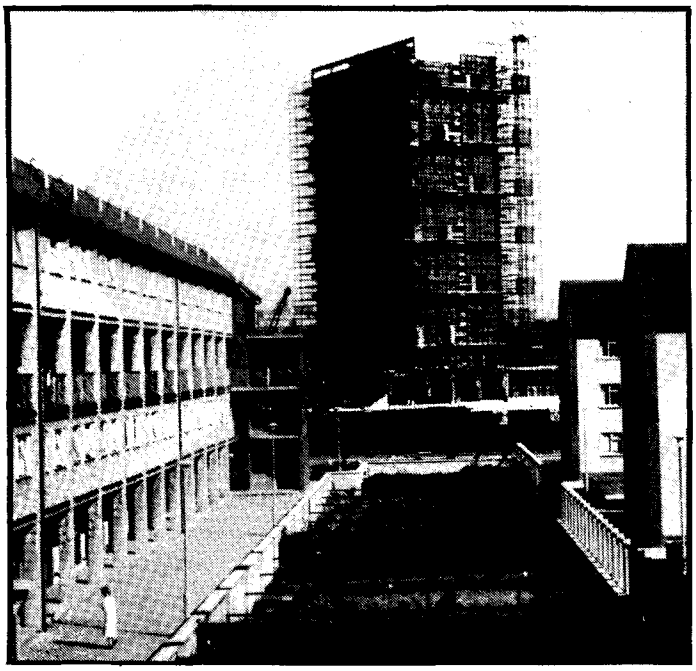

To understand how this has come about, it is necessary to grasp something of the interconnection between monetary policy (money supply and interest rates) and fiscal policy (government expenditure and taxation). This is best explained in the context of a more detailed look at the Budget.

The Budget

The main Budget measures were: a substantial reduction in income tax, including the raising of thresholds, plus the reduction of the standard rate from 33% to 30% and of the top rate from 83% to 60%; the raising of VAT on all goods (other than those zero-rated or exempt) to 15% in place of the present 8% and 12½%; substantial cuts in public spending amounting to £2600m in 1979-80 (including the expected effect of non-adjustment of cash limits in the face of accelerating inflation); sale of public assets amounting to £1000m, including a further sale of BP shares; a target growth of the money supply at 7-11% at an annual rate in the 10 months from mid-June 1979 to mid-April 1980; and the easing of restrictions on direct investment overseas.

These measures are fairly consistent with the previously declared principles of Tory macroeconomic management: strict control of the money supply; a reduction in government expenditure and taxation as a proportion of national income; and a shift away from direct taxation (taxation of incomes) to indirect taxation (taxation of expenditure). For the year 1979-80 these changes are expected to cause a slight reduction in tax revenue, but one which is much smaller than the cuts in expenditure. At the same time the money supply target is very similar to Labour's 8-12% for the year to October 1979, and therefore contains no allowance for the expected 3½% rise in the Retail Price Index directly caused by the indirect tax increases. The important point to grasp, however, is that once having decided on this monetary target, the Tories had to adapt other aspects of their policy in order to make it attainable. The reason for this is as follows. When the government itself is in deficit (ie, its expenditure exceeds its revenue), it is pumping money into the economy, thus increasing the money supply. It can cover this deficit in two ways: by selling its own securities to the public, or by selling them to the banks. For reasons which I shall not go into here, selling securities to the banks permits them to increase their lending and this causes a further creation of money, so that it is disastrous for a policy of restricting the money supply. But selling securities to the public is only possible if the interest rate is sufficiently attractive. So the more the government has to sell to the public (ie, the larger its deficit) the more interest rates are likely to rise, with undesirable political consequences.

The Government's Deficit

Since 1975, the deficit of the UK government, in common with that of most other advanced capitalist countries, has been fairly large. This is partly a direct result of the recession itself: the unemployed receive government money and pay back very little in tax. The pre-Budget forecast of the deficit for the financial year 1979-80 was judged to be too high for the monetary target to be achieved without a very severe rise in interest rates. Higher interest rates were undesirable politically, because they would attract further foreign funds to Britain and push the international value of sterling still higher. Therefore the Budget was designed to reduce the Government's financial deficit. £1000m worth of reduction is to be achieved by the announced sale of public assets; but the rest is to come from the cuts in government expenditure, which are larger than the cuts in tax revenue. This will have a direct deflationary effect on the economy. Certainly the Tories would have preferred, for political if for no other reasons, to make larger cuts in taxation than in government expenditure. And yet, in spite of this, in his Budget speech Sir Geoffrey Howe felt obliged to announce a rise in Minimum Lending Rate of 2%, taking it to 14%.

It may seem superfluous to pay so much attention to a Budget which is only the first of a series which the Government will introduce. But it is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the Tories have used the opportunity to make major structural changes (eg, in taxation) while they still hold the political initiative. Secondly, it has initiated a distinctive policy of forcing British capitalism to put its own house in order without the help of demand-boosting and profit-boosting initiatives from the Government. This is the clear implication of the Government's announced intention to reduce its own borrowing steadily over the next few years (as a proportion of national income). Such a policy means that the Government will lack the ability to boost the economy by expenditure increases or tax cuts for the foreseeable future. Inded the Tories have embarked upon a tremendous gamble here. If the private sector fails to develop some momentum of its own and continues to stagnate, then the Government will find itself condemned by its own policy to be an impotent spectator on the sidelines. With the economy already moving towards recession, and no serious prospect of an export boom while the world economy grows only slowly and increasing North Sea oil output keeps the pound up in the foreign exchange markets, it is very hard to see where any expansionary impulse is to come from. If the Government makes no move, then British capitalism will be forced to pull itself up by its own bootstraps or face a crisis of major proportions.

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The 'Incentives' Rhetoric

It is against this background that one should assess the Tory rhetoric about 'incentives'. The argument is that the reduced income tax rates will increase the incentive to work and produce in the private sector, thus stimulating output and employment. But most economists are sceptical about this for two reasons. Firstly, the incentives created by

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reductions in income tax are immediately destroyed by the higher prices caused by any matching increases in indirect taxation (except in the case of those who have no intention of spending their extra income). Secondly, such tax reductions could easily cause a fall rather than a rise in the hours which people decide to work, because the take-home pay from normal working time reduces the economic pressure to moonlight or work overtime. The extreme vagueness of Tory statements about how and why incentives would achieve their effect suggests that the Government does not expect any immediately noticeable results from its policy. The tax changes form part of a whole social programme of revival through the development of a spirit of enterprise, self-reliance and individualism, and their principal aim is to widen the gap between rich and poor. Such a programme requires a vigorous offensive against the strong egalitarian currents in modern British society — for which the 'incentives' argument is ideally suited.

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

The most striking feature of the Tories' industrial policy is their determination to sell off large slices of the assets of the public sector. Apart from the sale of government holdings in firms which are only partly state-owned, they have developed the idea of selling shares of industries which are currently 100% nationalised. The last Labour government did at one point sell a large number of BP shares, reducing its holding from 75% to 51%, but it also enlarged the scope of the public sector in various directions by new nationalisations (British National Oil Corporation, National Enterprise Board, British Aerospace, British Shipbuilders). By contrast the Tories will certainly do all they can to avoid any new nationalisations, however decrepit the firm or industry concerned, and will denationalise or water down the state component in many state-owned enterprises. This policy is very much a part of the philosophy developed while in Opposition, but it has acquired a new urgency in recent months because of the Government's thirst for funds. The Treasury ministers have indicated that they wish to see a steady reduction in government borrowing during the next two years. Each pound raised by the sale of state shareholdings is a pound less to be found through either expenditure cuts or tax increases, both of which would be politically unpopular and economically deflationary.

The NEB

The National Enterprise Board is to be retained under the Tories but given a very limited role. It was in any case a mere shadow of its original conception. In the programme developed by the Labour Left before the 1974 elections, the government was to nationalise one major firm in each industry and use it as a source of inside information with which to control the big private firms. The NEB was to be the holding company which formally owned the state firms. Under the Labour Right it had limited funds but brought under its wing a number of lame ducks, the most notable of which was British Leyland. Under the Tories the NEB will have three functions: it will retain responsibility for 'hospital cases' (firms which it is hoped will eventually become profitable and can be sold off); it will act as a regional development agency for England (to match the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies); and it will continue to provide capital for high-risk ventures in high technology. The NEB retains these functions chiefly because, in present circumstances, they would have to be performed by some government agency in any case.

Ironically enough BNOC, although entirely separate from the NEB conforms most closely to the conception of nationalisation for which the NEB was the chosen vehicle. This is because the Labour Right wanted to use it as an instrument for asserting state conrol over a vital economic and strategic resource. In pursuit of this policy BNOC was given powers which were in some respects quite extensive. Amongst the Tories, strategic considerations still carry some weight, but BNOC's powers and assets will nevertheless be reduced, because of a mixture of general ideological preferences, the lobbying of the oil companies (the Chairman of Shell has been Mrs Thatcher's adviser on these matters) and a desire to raise money. Thus, although BNOC will retain its right to buy 51% of the output of each North Sea oil field, it may be split up, and some of its assets will be sold; its share of exploration and production licences in future rounds will be reduced; its right to sit on operating committees of oil fields in which it has no equity interest will be removed; and so on. These proposals have been condemned as capitulation to the oil companies by Lord Kearton, Chairman of BNOC and former Chairman of ICI. The Government's control of the oil industry will be further weakened by the promised sale of more BP shares, which will mean that the Government no longer has a controlling interest in the company.

For other nationalised industries the treatment will vary according to the circumstances. The Tories have said that they will sell half the shares in British Aerospace. They also wish to sell shares in British Airways but are hampered at the moment by its uncertain profitability. For British Shipbuilders, all of whose companies are currently making a loss, the Government is making no commitment beyond the next two years. Private shareholding in British Gas is also being contemplated although the Board vigorously opposes this.

Reducing Subsidies

The other major aspect of Tory industrial policy is to phase out or reduce government subsidies to industry. Not surprisingly this causes some disquiet in the CBI. Because of this and because of the recognition that industry abroad also receives government subsidies of various sorts, this policy will no doubt be applied with a certain degree of caution. To save money this year, the payment of regional development grants is being delayed for four months, and the proportion of Britain with Development Area status is being significantly reduced from the early 1980s. The 1979-80 budget for the various employment-creating schemes has been cut back by 32%. Discretionary aid to industry under the 1972 Industry Act will no doubt be used extremely sparingly (altogether 14 industries received such aid under the Labour government).

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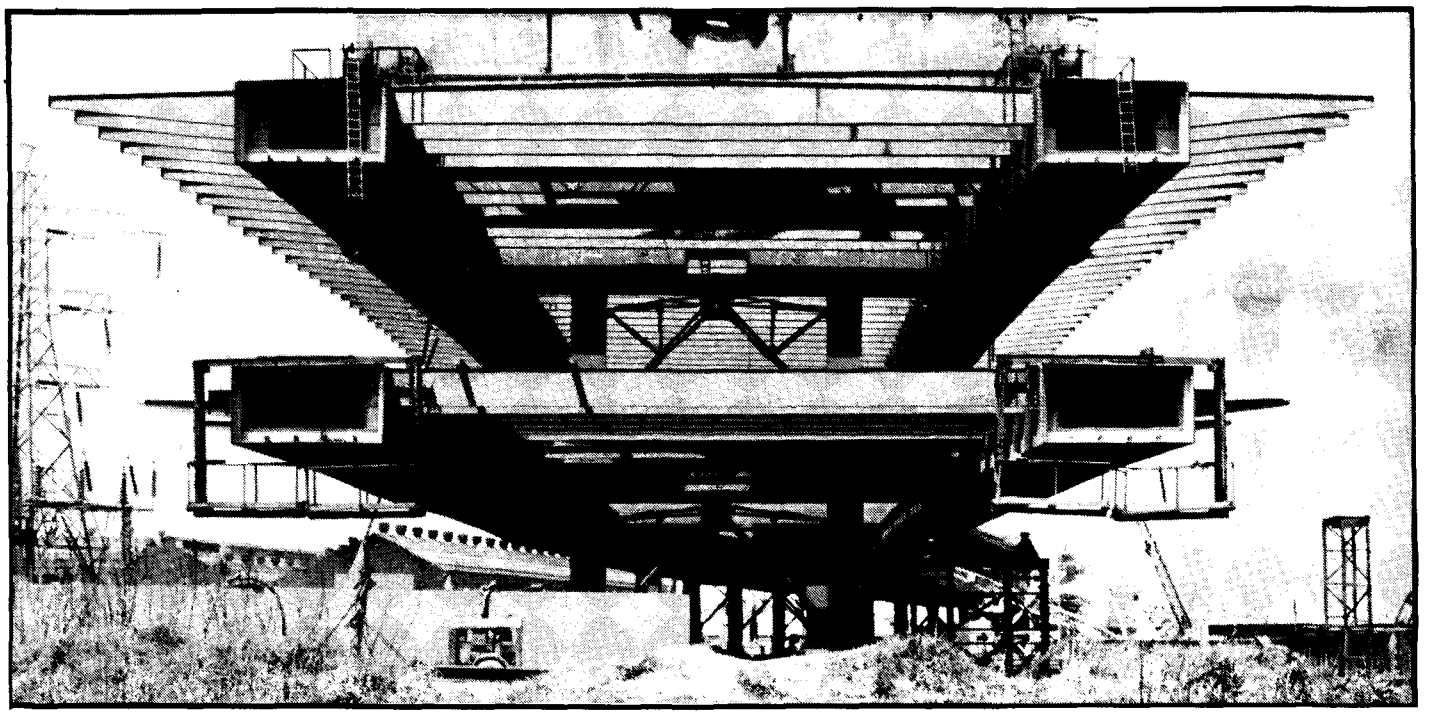

WAGES AND PRICES

One of the first acts of the new Government was to abolish the Price Commission. This reflects a general desire to keep the state out of the market place, particularly in situations where its intervention might depress profits and 'discourage enterprise'. The effect of the abolition of the Commission on the price level will turn out to be small, however, because the criteria for price increases had already been significantly relaxed by the Labour government. Nevertheless it means that an important instrument of government control over the private sector has disappeared.

On the critical question of wages, the Tories will attempt to pursue a rather different policy from that of the outgoing Labour government. Whilst they are equally concerned to keep money wage increases down, their strategy for doing so involves an increased emphasis on persuasion and a reduced role for government devised limits or norms, either statutory or voluntary. The key to their policy of persuasion is that it will be backed by the threat that the Government will be resolute and tough in dealing with the consequences of high wage increases. As already mentioned, the Tories hope to convince the trade union movement that the Government will refuse to bail out bankrupt firms or to adopt a looser monetary policy under any circumstances. Such a position reflects the general Tory attitude that the government should not stoop to negotiate with the trade unions, but should impose its will on them with authority. Their critique of a long-running incomes policy such as Labour's is that it inevitably drags the government into negotiations in an attempt to secure acceptance. They very much reject the notion, expressed by a number of Ministers in the last Labour government, that incomes policy should become a permanent feature of economic life.

The weakness of the persuasion policy is that the threats are not totally convincing. They depend on the Government being prepared to tolerate without flinching rises in such politically sensitive indicators as the unemployment and mortgage rates. For this reason the Government has searched around for other ways to keep wage increases down. It has rushed through, in time for this autumn, a new 'Tax and Price Index' which will increase less fast than the Retail Price Index in periods of cuts in income tax. They have talked about setting up a National Economic Forum consisting of the Government, the CBI and the TUC to discuss (but *not* decide) what level of wage increase the nation could afford. And there are the proposed changes in the law on secondary picketing, which are designed to reduce the effectiveness of industrial action.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TORY AND LABOUR

How different is Tory economic policy from that of the outgoing Labour government? In industrial and in wages policy, it is really the difference between the liberal approach and the interventionist one. The Labour government was moving towards permanent regulation of money wage increases, whereas the Tory government regards such legislative interference in the labour market as an emergency measure only. Labour had an 'industrial strategy', the purpose of which was to find ways of using the power and resources of government to improve the economic performance of the private sector; under Sir Keith Joseph, the industrial strategy is to let the private sector get on with it. In addition, there is a marked difference in policy on the size of the public sector. The Labour government had no programmes for de-nationalisation, and was prepared to take more industries or firms into public ownership; the Tories are committed to reducing the size of the public sector buy selling off assets, and to diluting it by selling shares in nationalised industries.

But in fiscal and monetary policy the difference is less significant. The Labour government already had a policy of monetary restraint. It had already acted to reverse the drift towards increasing direct taxation (relative to indirect taxation) that had taken place between 1970 and 1976. It had already reduced government expenditure relative to national income (from 46½% of gross domestic product in 1975-76 to 42% in 1978-79, with spending on goods and services falling from 27% to 23½% of GDP), and its plan for 2% per annum growth in government expenditure was meant to imply a further fall, since it was hoped that GDP would grow by at least 3% pa. It had already committed itself to a faster growth of spending on defence than on other items, by accepting the NATO target of a 3% pa increase in real terms. It had initiated the practice of selling off publicly owned assets to reduce government borrowing when it let its own holding of BP shares fall from 75% to 51%.

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Thus the difference between Labour and Conservative governments in fiscal and monetary policy is essentially one of degree. Tory monetary policy will be almost identical to Labour's. In fiscal matters the Tories will try to reduce the share of government expenditure in GDP faster, and to reduce income tax faster. But it is an illusion to think that Labour would not have moved in the same direction. For instance, the cash limits announced by the outgoing Government in March allowed for inflation at a rate of only 8½%, at a time when it was already clear that the actual rate was going to be well into double figures, thus implying a significant cut in previously announced expenditure plans. And there have been fairly authoritative leaks to the effect that Mr Healey's Budget, like the Tories', would have contained large increases in indirect taxes.

THE PROSPECTS

Can the Tories succeed in implementing their policies? The most critical issues are those surrounding government expenditure and taxation. The Tories have stated publicly that they aim to reduce the standard rate of income tax to 25%, and it will now be difficult for them to claim success for their taxation policy unless they achieve that. But such a reduction would cost a lot of money, which must be found from somewhere. VAT has probably reached the limits of political acceptability for the moment, so the only scope for making further shifts towards indirect taxation lies in raising the duties on such commodities as tobacco, alcohol and petrol, which have fallen in real terms over the last decade. But the Government does have the stroke of luck of being able to look forward to substantial income from Petroleum Revenue Tax, which up to now has been entirely offset by generous allowances on further capital investment by North Sea oil producers. With the aid of this, the Government may find a way to reach its 25% target.

The Structural Changes

Since the Tories have expressed their plans for government expenditure in terms of its share of national income, much depends on whether and by how much the economy expands. If it does expand, the *share* of government expenditure can be reduced by keeping the *level* steady, whereas if the economy continues to stagnate, a reduction in the share can only come about by reductions in the actual level of expenditure. Some of the difficulties the Government faces here are apparent from what has happened in the last six months. In the past the Tories have criticised the Labour government for cutting capital expenditure rather than current expenditure and during the election campaign they claimed that their cuts would be achieved by eliminating waste. But in practice their own cuts in planned expenditure have followed the familiar pattern: invstment has been cut proportionately more than consumption. The Tories are afraid to take on the public sector unions and the communities that would be affected by sizable cuts in current expenditure. Because of the political sensitivity of the whole issue, we can expect that government expenditure will be squeezed fairly hard in the next couple of years, and then allowed to increase somewhat as the next election approaches. But there will be no truly massive cuts (many of the cuts that have so far occurred represent reductions in planned increases).

The difficulties involved in selling off public sector assets look likely to be more technical than political. Since jobs and incomes will not come under immediate threat, there will probably be only limited opposition from the workers concerned; whilst to the population as a whole such measures can be presented as a favourable alternative to tax increases.

Because they are trying to push through these changes in an unfavourable and even deteriorating economic situation, they are likely to face strong opposition.

The Threat of Opposition

So much for the structural changes envisaged by the Tories. Because they are trying to push through these changes in an unfavourable and even deteriorating economic situation, they are likely to face strong opposition. It is hard to argue the virtues of free enterprise and reduced state spending when registered unemployment is rising towards the 2 million mark. This is the difficulty which faced the Heath government in its 'Selsdon Man' phase, and which eventually led to its celebrated U-turn. The fear of being pushed into a similar U-turn haunts the present Tory government.

Paradoxically, the distinctive Tory presentation of their economic policy may turn out to be more significant than the genuine differences between their policy and that of their Labour predecessors. Their offensive against government expenditure is part of a deliberate campaign to effect an ideological shift in British society, by breaking down the reliance on free state provision of a wide range of services which formed one of the major pillars of the postwar social consensus. For example, a succession of cuts has brought the National Health Service to the point where it could conceivably degenerate into a second-rate service used only by those who cannot afford private health insurance Many Tories would be delighted to see this happen, but it was certainly not the intention of Labour policy. The Labour government made cuts without relish and in the hope that they would be temporary. The Tories regard them as inherently virtuous.

In the short term, it will be hard for the Tories to make a sizable impact on the level of government expenditure. But if they can use their term in office to undermine the widespread belief in the value of state provision of a variety of services, then they will have paved the way for future popular acceptance of a smaller state sector. The vigorous ideological campaign in favour of individualism and free enterprise, marking a sharp break with social democracy, is the cutting edge of a Tory offensive which poses a considerable political challenge to the left. What is really at stake here are the popular attitudes of the future — how much state provision will people expect as a basic right? The key determinants of these future attitudes will not be the exact differences between what the Tories do and what Labour might have done, but whether the Tory approach appears to have been a success or a failure. Accordingly, Government initiatives must not simply be blocked; as in 1974, they must be seen to have been defeated.

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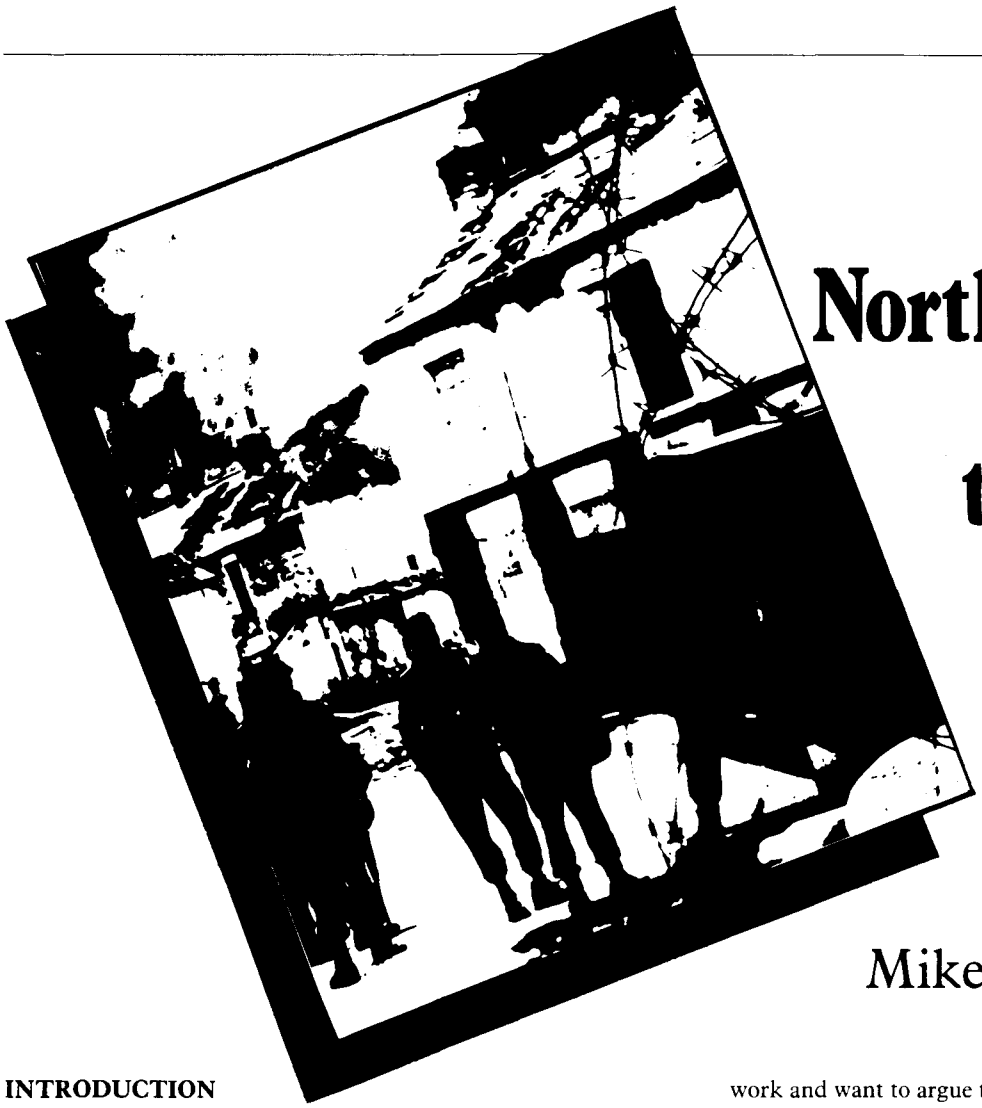

Northern Ireland: why the trade unions are central

Mike and Sean Morrissey

INTRODUCTION

Much of what is written about Northern Ireland focuses upon the political and military crisis of the past ten years. It is not surprising that this should be the case. Ten years of crisis, persistent urban guerrilla war and the collapse of a government that had sole power for fifty years followed by the prorogation of the local parliament, Stormont, and the imposition of direct rule, are all phenomena worthy of attention by the left. The costs of the situation, both in human and economic terms, have been enormous. There are large urban areas destroyed, the dead and injured number thousands, the prisons are full to bursting and the coercive apparatuses of the British state use a wide range of emergency legislation to develop sophisticated counter insurgency techniques. Perhaps most striking is the manner in which the situation constantly reproduces itself. Each election reproduces patterns of bloc voting with votes only redistributing themselves within the blocs, now characterised by a multiplicity of parties rather than the previous monoliths. For instance the elections for the European Parliament saw a simple division of the votes on one hand to Ian Paisley and John Taylor and on the other to John Hume and Bernadette Devlin. The Provisional IRA manages to reproduce an effective military capacity so that just when the Northern Ireland Office declares that they are close to defeat, they stage a spectacular series of coups. Thus Northern Ireland is clearly a fascinating object of study for the political analyst if only as a potent example of where political behaviour is not reducible to class determination.

However the complex and extreme problems of Northern Ireland tend not only to overshadow work within trade unions but also to prejudice the analyses that are made of such work. In this article we hope to produce what we believe is a Marxist perspective on such work and want to argue that trade unions represent possibly the best location for class work in the present situation. We would contend that the preoccupations of the left in Northern Ireland simultaneously lead to an overestimation and an underestimation of the potential of the trade union movement. There is for example a tendency towards uncritical affirmation of trade union work. It is perceived as being about the real business of the working class, the protection of jobs, the fight for wages and conditions and, exceptionally, the struggle to exclude sectarianism from the workplace. Such a stance leads to a blinkered reality which ignores the widespread use of repressive legislation and the historical persistence of discrimination in employment patterns. It is a position which has been wholly endorsed by the Northern Ireland Office so that its most prominent exponents have had their usual rewards in the Queen's Honours' lists. At the same time sections of the left narrowly concentrating on 'solutions' to the political/military crises have tended to undervalue trade union work. There have been two positions, both claiming a Marxist orthodoxy, which, in our view, make this mistake. The first within the tradition of Republican Socialism holds that the principal problem is that of British Imperialism exercised through simple Colonialism in the North and Neo-Colonialism in the South. The only possible emancipation of the working class lies in resolving the 'National Question' and in expelling the Imperialist power, Britain. Trade union struggles, therefore, can only be reformist except to the extent that they are able to relate trade union issues to broader national ones. On the other a position has emerged so consumed with the refutation of the other that it has tended, like the Unionist Government in the 1950s, to dismiss the Northern Ireland trade union movement as a Republican conspiracy. Each is a mirror image of the other and, in the final analysis, both are moralistic rather than Marxist.

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Why They Are Defective

We find both of them defective starting points for an analysis of trade union work in Northern Ireland. Apart from the very cogent arguments advanced by Bew, Gibbon and Patterson[1] about the inadequacies of the traditional formulation of the Imperialist thesis, we have three reasons for saying so. Firstly they suggest a 'conditional' formula for the evaluation of trade union work. Such work is evaluated positively only to the degree that it tends towards a set of conditions necessary for the solution of the general crisis. Thus Tobin writes, 'We should be clear then that any strategy which has its laudable aim that of developing working class unity has definite limits so long as the national question remains on the agenda and that furthermore it remains on the agenda by Republican intransigence as much as by unionist "reaction".'[2]

The trouble with 'conditional' formulae is that we frequently do not have the power to enforce the conditions. There is certainly no present indication of the disappearance of either 'Republican intransigence' nor 'Unionist reaction'. The result is to largely dismiss a whole category of working class experience.

Secondly there are a range of problems which have to be faced by the working class and against which trade unions represent the first line of working class defence. There is always conflict on the shop floor

> The economy has deep structural problems . . . the depression experienced by British capitalism since 1973 has had much exaggerated effects in Northern Ireland.

or, most pressing at the moment, Tory economic strategy which will generate an enormous number of redundancies in Northern Ireland. There is thus a real need for a perspective on the tactics and strategy of defending the working class firstly in such a way as to be effective and secondly to raise the political implications of economic issues. Neither of the positions outlined can properly do so since the status of trade union work is subordinate to their own very narrow perspectives.

Finally they both represent exhortations, from outside the trade union movement, to achieve goals for which forces cannot be mobilised. The failure of the trade unions to move along such prescribed paths is then used as the bludgeon to attack them. In that such exhortations are hopelessly unrealistic, their positions may be described as purely formal since the critique of the trade unions is based on the non endorsement of purely formal demands that have little relationship to trade union practice.

Our own position is that the analysis of trade union work must begin in the first instance with an examination of the changing economic base of Northern Ireland and secondly with a review of the history of the movement in Northern Ireland. These we regard as the determining conditions for trade union work. Inevitably this entails an analysis of economic policy in Northern Ireland given the crucial role of the public sector and the amount of public support required by the private sector. However there are other realities of the situation which cannot be ignored. These are manifold but we would concentrate on the two most relevent. The first is the existence of a dual labour market for Protestants and Catholics, created by the historical incidence of discriminatory employment policies. Linked to that has been the geographical dual economy where the east of the province developed an advanced industrial base and the west remained undeveloped with massive pools of male unemployment. This factor is significant. It can be seen in public attitudes towards the fight to protect jobs where Catholic West Belfast would be quite happy to see the collapse of Harland & Wolff shipyard, a traditional employer of Protestant labour. There is secondly the question of the use of emergency legislation in Northern Ireland and the behaviour of the coercive apparatuses of the British state. These are relevent firstly in their pervasive effect in many areas of civil society[3] and secondly to the degree that Northern Ireland has become the testing ground for a variety of techniques for the management of the working class by repression[4]. All of these features raise issues for trade union work and need to be incorporated in any analysis.

THE ECONOMIC BASE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland has an industrial tradition that dates back to the early part of the nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century Belfast was an industrialised Victorian city based on shipbuilding, engineering and linen. By the middle of the twentieth century this narrow economic base was in decline. However capitalism was well established in Northern Ireland, the economy was integrated with the British with Belfast, Liverpool and Glasgow representing an industrial triangle, each city having certain common industrial elements. After the Second World War, shipbuilding and linen went into deep crisis and both began to shed labour. The rationalisation of agriculture meant large scale job loss in that sector also. In 1950 shipbuilding and linen accounted for 55% of the manufacturing workforce, by 1975 this had been reduced to 28%. Agriculture in 1950 accounted for 20% of total employment, by 1977 this had declined to 9%. Since 1950, 106,000 jobs have been lost in these three sectors.

However during that period, unemployment rates vacillated around 7%, so clearly there were counter tendencies in operation. These can be identified as four factors. In the first place the numbers employed in the service sector increased dramatically. In 1950 the service sector accounted for 37% of the workforce which by 1975 had increased to 57.6%. Secondly the numbers employed in the public sector also increased primarily as the result of the development of a welfare state. By 1975 this numbered 180,000 employees. Thirdly the government intervened to sponsor and subvent industrial activity, principally through the attraction of external investment by means of incentives. In 1961 government sponsored industry was responsible for 22.5% of all manufacturing employment, by 1972 this share had grown to 44.9%. The number of jobs gained in this way can be gauged from the following table covering 1967-78.

Year	New	No. of Projects	Expansions	No. of Projects	Total	No. of Projects
1967	2,329	11	3,089	19	5,418	30
1968	3,245	17	3,454	26	6,699	43
1969	2,491	10	3,452	24	5,943	34
1970	2,102	13	4,382	43	6,484	56
1971	1,620	14	5.645	60	7,265	74
1972	677	6	6,187	42	6,864	48
1973	1,213	13	3,969	57	5,182	70
1974	1,346	12	3,460	35	4,806	47
1975	473	7	2,602	17	3,075	24
1976	1,122	11	1,129	19	2,251	30
1977	1,463	9	2,230	27	3,693	26
1978	4,066	10	1,719	33	5,785	43

[1] See P Bew, P Gibbon and H Patterson, *The State in Northern Ireland*, Ch 1 MUP, 1979.

[2] P Tobin, 'Ulster Unionism' in *Problems of Communism*, Summer 1979, p21.

[3] See J Ditch and M Morrissey, *The Social Policy Implications of the use of Emergency legislation in Northern Ireland*, Social Administration Association Conference, 1979.

[4] See R Evelegh, *Peace Keeping in a Democratic Society*, OUP, 1978.

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Finally emigration has been a steady feature of Northern Ireland life and has helped offset job loss by the simple expedient of exporting a section of the unemployed. Net migration from Northern Ireland averaged 10,549 per year since 1971. Thus the real core of Northern Ireland's economic problems has been the deterioration of its traditional narrow economic base. Compensation for this has only been partial and is crucially dependent upon public expenditure.

The degree of importance of public expenditure for Northern Ireland can be seen by comparing the amounts spent per head of the population there and in the other three countries of the UK.

Public expenditure per head in £s	1969/70	1970/71	1971/72	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75
England	246	276	308	349	431	582
Scotland	335	364	403	460	517	691
Wales	295	316	359	401	452	601
Northern Ireland	282	339	387	457	517	756

The trend is obvious: in 1969 Northern Ireland had the second lowest public expenditure per head. Six years later it had the highest and this has continued since. In fact security accounts for only a small proportion of the support.

It is certainly true that the degree of compensation for industrial decline has only been partial. Throughout the 1970s the rate of unemployment in Northern Ireland has generally been about twice the UK rate. Between 1970 and 1976 the numbers unemployed in Northern Ireland rose from 36,500 to 55,100, an increase from 7% to 10.4%. The increase was particularly severe for female workers, the numbers going up to 17,500 which was double the 1970 figure. Moreover the west of the province has continued to suffer disproportionate levels of unemployment. In June 1961 Belfast had 5.3% unemployment, Dungannon 8.2%, Newry 17% and Strabane 14.8%, by Dec, 1978 these had risen to 8.6%, 20.4%, 21.9% and 26.7%. Only Newry had made any gain relative to Belfast, with all the other rates increasing more than proportionately. The entire province suffers exceptional levels of unemployment but its western area have higher rates again.

Social Consequences

The historical persistence of large scale unemployment has created serious social consequences. In the first instance a very high proportion of the population has been dependent on social security and secondly the size of the reserve army has acted to depress wages. A number of surveys have revealed the extent of poverty and other malaise factors in Northern Ireland. In 1975, the Northern Ireland Household Survey revealed that 35% of the population was living on or below needs level. Housing unfitness effects one in five houses. There are higher rates of overcrowding and of sickness of heads of households in Northern Ireland than in the UK. In 1978 Evason[5] reworked the data of the Household Survey to obtain a fresh analysis of family poverty in Northern Ireland. Her conclusion was that 30.4% of families were living below needs level and 12.3% of families were on the borderline. She argued that the three primary causes of poverty were low wages, unemployment and single parenthood. The results of the Belfast Household Survey (1979) are even more depressing. In areas of West Belfast there are rates of unemployment in excess of 50%.

The extent of low pay in Northern Ireland was demonstrated in a recent edition of the Low Pay Bulletin[6]. The two following tables are a sharp illustration of the extent of relative disadvantage:

Average weekly earnings:
Northern Ireland/Great Britain Comparison 1977

	Average Weekly Earnings (£)		% £60/Wk or under		% £40/Wk or under	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
NI	72.1	50.2	40.9	78.0	3.9	33.0
GB	78.6	51.0	27.0	78.0	2.4	28.8

Average Household Income 1975/76

	Average H/h Income	% £60/Wk	% £40/Wk
NI	65.55	49.0	37.1
GB	77.59	41.3	26.3

Indeed the overall regional disadvantage can easily be discerned from the figures published earlier this year by the Northern Ireland Office. Northern Ireland has higher unemployment, lower average earnings, lower activity rates, higher net migration and infant mortality and higher dependence on Supplementary Benefits and Family Income Supplement[7].

Regional Social and Economic Indicators in the United Kingdom

	Northern Ireland	Great Britain South	Great Britain North
Unemployed (seasonally adjusted) % (average for 1978)	10.9	4.9	8.2
Average weekly earnings (£) (1977)			
Male	72.1	84.1	77.5
Female	50.2	54.9	49.6
Activity Rates (1) (1976)			
Male	74.4	81.0	79.6
Female	40.1	46.9	43.9
Net Emigration (% of population 1970-75)	0.6	0.3	0.2
Infant Mortality per 1000 births (1976)	18.4	13.6	14.5
Supplementary benefits per head population (75/76) (£)	30.40	19.98	26.24
Family Income Supplement per head population (75/76) (£)	1.28	0.16	0.22

In the present situation, the indications are that steady decline will continue and with Tory economic policy, there can be expected sharp cuts in public expenditure. The effects of these cuts will be particularly harsh because of the province's high levels of dependence. In 1976 Northern Ireland, with 2.5% of the UK population had to bear 3.5% of the cuts. The conjunction of private sector decline and public sector contraction could induce an economy beyond the threshold of recovery.

[5] See E Evason, *Family Poverty in Northern Ireland*, CPAG, 1978.
[6] From B Black and R Steele, 'Low Payment in Northern Ireland' *The Low Pay Bulletin*, February 1979.
[7] From *Economic and Social Progress in Northern Ireland*, HMSO, 1979.

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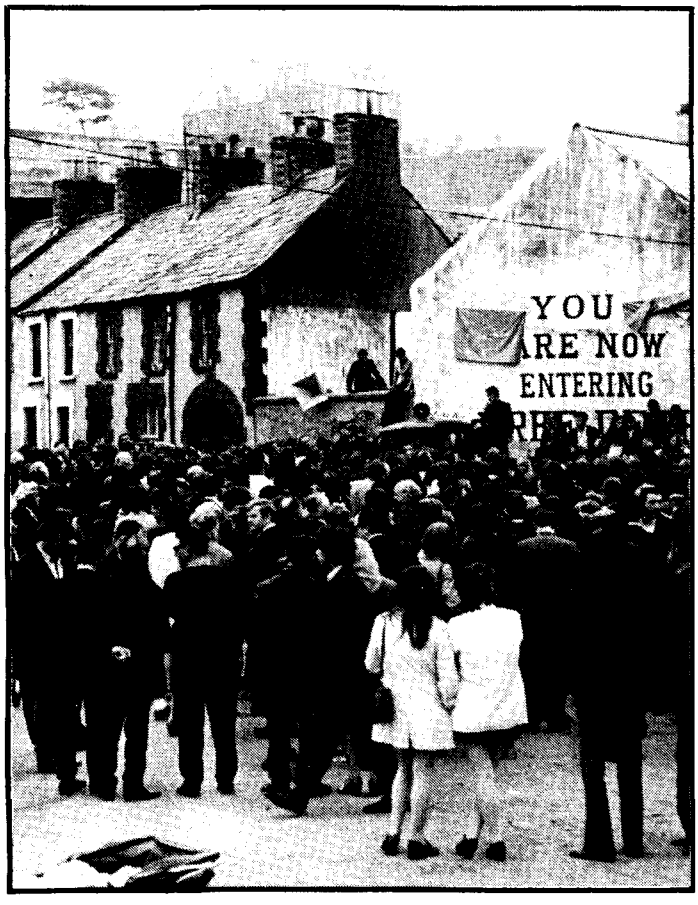

Nor is it certain that new investment in itself would reverse current trends. Northern Ireland has not been exempt from the process of job destruction through the implementation of new technology. Byrne's review of the deindustrialisation of the Northern Ireland economy[8] predicted both the collapse of many large plants and the reduction of the labour force in others through investment in new technology. It would seem however that Northern Ireland suffers in both directions. In 1977 Du Pont announced an investment of £29 millions in the Derry plant. Although a large proportion of this was government grant aid, the end result will be 200 fewer jobs there by 1980. In September 1979, ICI announced redundancies in the Carrickfergus plant. Apart from the general problems of the fibre industry, the reason given was the decision to locate the new generation of capital equipment elsewhere.

In short, therefore, the Northern Ireland economy has deep structural problems. The traditional economic base has been in sharp decline, replacement industries have in the first instance employed far fewer and in many cases are exhibiting a shorter life span. The depression experienced by British capitalism since 1973 has had much exaggerated effects in Northern Ireland. Certainly autonomous local phenomena, the guerrilla war, the general strike organised by the Ulster Workers Council in 1974, have had disastrous effects. Nevertheless the trends pre-exist these and have continued throughout the seventies.

Economic Prospects

The latest and most comprehensive analysis of Northern Ireland, undertaken by a review team from the Department of Commerce the 'Quigley' Report[9], as it has been called, came to some very pessimistic conclusions about the Northern Ireland economy. Its recommendations for a possible recovery strategy included the reorganisation of industrial incentive schemes to make them at least as attractive as those in the Irish Republic, and the development of a much more positive economic role by the state acting as entrepreneur through the Northern Ireland Development Agency to create 1500 jobs per year. What was clear in the report was that there had been no sudden conversion to a policy of nationalisation, but that in order to maintain and support the industrial infrastructure and make some kind of attack on umemployment, public intervention was vital. It has already been said that Northern Ireland is particularly dependent on manifold forms of public expenditure. In industry this has progressed so far that any risk bearing venture by private business, such as recapitlisation, is expected to be accomplished by extensive support from public funds. The socialisation of risks is of course a feature of state monopoly capital, but in Northern Ireland this seems to have taken an extreme form. While employment does result from this process, it remains the case that public expenditure subvents the rate of profit. Indeed the overall level of subsidy for Northern Ireland from the British Exchequer is currently so high, in all its forms approaching £1 billion per year, it is arguable that the province is the locale of an upward transfer of income. Thus the bulk of UK taxpayers are contributing to the subsidising of the rate of profit in Northern Ireland. One obvious example will illustrate the point. The costs of energy are considerably higher in Northern Ireland than in Britain. The Northern Ireland Electricity Service was given a grant of £200 million which was used to support the price at which industry bought electricity but not that charged to the domestic consumer. Taxes paid by the whole of the UK community are thus spent in Northern Ireland to improve the rate of profit that can be gained there. Again this is a general process within the UK with private industry being one of the very big receivers of government support. It is the degree to which it happens that makes Northern Ireland exceptional.

This is the economic context of trade union work in Northern Ireland.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

If a trade union movement can be said to exist in Northern Ireland, it is represented by the Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The Northern Committee is different from a regional committee of the TUC. It is elected each year at a Northern Ireland conference and concerns itself with general problems of trade unionism and work. It is the body which negotiates with government on Northern Ireland issues and makes trade union appointments on various public bodies. It co-ordinates and directs the strategy of the trade unions organised in Northern Ireland.

The history of the Northern Committee has been confused and difficult. It was set up in 1944 and the following year saw a major split between Irish trade unions. A break away group set up the Congress of Irish Unions separate from the Irish Trade Union Congress. The basis of the division was the conflict between British unions which had historically organised in Ireland and continued to do so and those which were Irish based. The Irish Unions felt threatened by the 'Amalgamated' unions and the Second World War, with Northern Ireland as part of the UK and therefore committed to the war effort and the Irish Free State neutral, acted as the catalyst in splitting the Irish TUC. It was not until 1959 that the split was healed under a formula which ensured (until 1971) that British based unions would not have a majority on the executive of the ICTU. The early years of

[8] D Byrne, *The Deindustrialisation of Northern Ireland*, Social Administration Conference, 1978.

[9] *Economic and Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland*, HMSO, 1976.

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the Northern Committee were thus within an organisational context of division and hostility.

Within Northern Ireland, the Northern Committee operated under severe difficulties. Along with the problems of operating within a permanently depressed economy with high levels of unemployment, there were many political obstacles since the Northern Ireland

> There can be no illusions about the weakness of the trade union movement in Northern Ireland, it would be astonishing if anything else were the case.

government and a vast number of Protestant working class loyalists were completely opposed to the idea of an all Ireland trade union movement which had a Northern section. The Northern Committee recognised this as can be seen from the functions that were set out at its first meeting, 'That the activities of the Committee should be confined to industrial and economic questions and matters which affect trade unions and workers, as such, leaving aside political issues except in so far as they are bound up with trade union interests."[10]

However this very cautious statement was to little avail since the Unionist government refused to deal with the Northern Committee for twenty years. In the absence of a Northern Ireland TUC the government preferred to work with confederations that were exclusively organised within Northern Ireland such as the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. At the time it was argued strongly that the opposition was merely a thinly disguised hostility to trade unionism generally.

At a conference in 1951, Betty Sinclair, of the Belfast Trades Council, asked why the government had not displayed the same truculence with the Church of Ireland, the Bank of Ireland and the Great Northern Railways, all of which were organised on an all Ireland basis and had their headquarters in Dublin. Her inference was plainly that finance and industrial capital and indeed the church were happy to work without reference to the border and were happily tolerated by government.

Stormont and the Trade Unions

The non recognition of the Northern Committee generated much friction, particularly when the Unionist government began to import the legislation of a welfare state. Some of this legislation necessitated trade union representation on boards and tribunals. The crucial case was an Employment and Training Bill. No nominations from the Northern Committee would be eligible for the advisory committees. The government made it plain that only nominations from individual unions would be acceptable. When challenged at Stormont by opposition MPs, the responsible minister Mr Neill replied, 'We do not particularly favour consultation with an alternative self constituted body whose head office is in a foreign country'[11].

Attempts to oppose this position were hindered by equivocation within the trade unions themselves. At one stage both the National Society of Painters and the Amalgamated Engineering Union took the view that the headquarters in Dublin were an offence to the Northern Ireland government and that if too strong a line was adopted then a wedge would be driven between the Northern Committee and the trade unions in the North. These two unions were aware that their own membership base made it very difficult for them to push the question.

It was obviously very difficult to develop a coherent trade union movement in Northern Ireland given the divisions within the movement nationally, the open hostility of government and support from masses of grass roots trade unionists for the general position the government had taken. Nevertheless the Northern Committee has made consistent efforts to raise economic questions in Northern Ireland. In 1952 a meeting was sought with the Prime Minister to discuss rising unemployment. This was refused. Meetings were held with British labour MPs to canvass support. A well documented case for the economic development of Northern Ireland was produced in 1954. Major conferences have been organised on unemployment and on the economy with reasonable regularity.

The Unionist government eventually recognised the Northern Committee in 1964. The need to broaden the economic base and attract external investment, all necessitated working with the trade union movement. In the 60s and 70s the Northern Committee has had no challenge as the institutional base of trade unions in Northern Ireland. What is interesting is that the trends in industrial relations during that period as indexed by the percentages of the workforce involved in stoppages and the average number of working days lost per year, demonstrate a much lower level of industrial militancy[12]. Presumably the figures for 1971-75 were pushed upwards by the Ulster Workers' Council strike but the averages were still below the UK.

Period	Average percentage of workforce involved in stoppages		Average number of working days lost per thousand workers per year	
	NI	UK	NI	UK
1961-65	7.9	6.5	161.0	139.9
1966-70	6.9	6.1	217.0	244.7
1971-75	4.4	6.1	446.0	584.6
1976	2.4	3.0	89.7	146.0
1977	4.7	5.1	306.3	447.0

Trade Union Strategy

The overall strategy of the Northern Committee in the 70s has been twofold. In the economic field there has been a steady attempt to pressure government into adopting the recommendations of the Quigley Report which had almost unqualified endorsement from the trade unions. At the Northern Ireland conference in 1977 the first motion on the agenda stated, 'We therefore welcome the Quigley Report which sets out the stark realities of the economic situation here unless immediate measures are taken to stabilise existing employment and to develop the economy. Conference demands that the Government implements without delay, the main recommendations contained within the Report'[13]. Again at the 1978 conference the employment motion called for alternative policies to eradicate unemployment including the 'expansion of direct state involvement in the manufacturing sector'[14]. Since then two such ventures, Strathern Audeo and Antrim Crystal, both located in West Belfast, have closed. At the moment, the possibility of the Tories embarking on a public investment programme in Northern Ireland is non existent. Still the Quigley recommendations remain central to trade union economic strategy in Northern Ireland.

[10] C McCarthy, *Trade unions in Ireland 1894-1960*, Institute of Public Administration, p318, 1977.

[11] *Ibid*, p334.

[12] *Facts and Figures on the Northern Ireland Economy*, Industrial Development Organiation Dept of Commerce, p26, Jan 1979.

[13] *Report on the Northern Conference*, Northern Committee ICTU, 1977.

[14] *Report on the Northern Conference*, Northern Committee ICTU, 1978.

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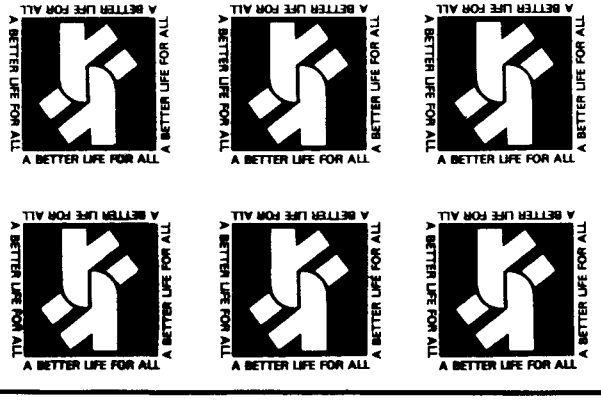
On the other hand the Northern Committee has attempted to mobilise mass support for a trade union programme against violence. The conviction of the need to intervene in the general situation grew out of spontaneous marches by workers in Newry, Craigavon and Derry against sectarian assasination. It was hoped to channel these feelings into a working class campaign against violence, against unemployment and for increased intervention to improve standards of welfare. However the expression of this in terms of a set of demands was only in very general, non contentious terms. Still a petition on the six demands of the 'Better Life For All' campaign obtained 200,000 signatures. As a campaign it was never properly developed and was eclipsed at an early stage by the more popular but ultimately more ephemeral demonstrations of the Peace People. In the last two years the 'Better Life For All' campaign has been administratively transformed into a programme without mass action implications. It has had, however, one very positive result, the regeneration of a trades council movement in Northern Ireland. Prior to the campaign only the Belfast trades council was active. Today there are 13 and they are generating some of the most interesting forms of work on both productive and reproductive issues.

TRADE UNION WORK IN THE PRESENT PERIOD

The significance of trade union work in the current situation in Northern Ireland is essentially a question about the relationship between the demands that can be made, the forces that can be mobilised for these and their overall effect upon the balance of class forces. It is clear that in Northern Ireland the crucial need is to work for the conditions under which class issues can predominate over sectarian ones. At one level this implies working on the contradictions which will exacerbate the fissures within sectarian blocs, at a second level it implies the development of class issues which transcend the pragmatism and economism of the blinkered approach to trade union work mentioned earlier. In this case the failure to confront the role of the British state is to merely replicate and therefore fail to deal with the persistent weakness of the trade union movement in Northern Ireland.

There can be no illusions about the weakness of the trade union movement in Northern Ireland. Given the review of the historical decline of the economy and of the organisational difficulties which have had to be faced, it would be astonishing if anything else were the case. However it is also true that working class movements in Northern Ireland are generally weak and more to the point what were originally areas for strategic advance have become cul de sacs. The question of democracy which the Unionist government was wholly unable to deal with except by attempted suppression has become consumed in a 'national struggle'. This struggle seems to have become a thing in itself, something to be kept going in the hope that British governments can be worn down in a process of attrition where the



It is our contention that trade union work . . . offers the best opportunity for class work or even in attempting to realise the preconditions for class work.

Republican participants do the bulk of the suffering. The class significance of the whole process is depressing, for it has alienated and incensed working class Protestants and reinforced the barriers that define the blocs. The first proposition about the significance of trade union work in this situation is that it is unavoidable. This is a statement which has a certain universal validity but needs to be emphasised for Northern Ireland. The inevitability of this form of struggle particularly in an economy heavily dependent on public expenditure when confronted with a government determined to axe public expenditure whatever the social costs, provides a mass of working class grievance that can only be the basis for class work. The challenge must therefore be to take these grievances as a starting point and find the tactics which, while inevitably defensive given the assaults on working class jobs and living standards, will nevertheless expand the areas of freedom within the structural limitations upon trade union work so that class postures become possible. It is not our view that the present Tory monetarist policies have suddenly provided new opportunities. Rather it is that the contradictions of state monopoly capitalism in Britain inevitably express themselves in terms of a fiscal crisis of public expenditure which in turn demand the reduction of working class living standards to facilitate the process of accumulation. Attacks on jobs and living standards are thus a characteristic of this period of British state monopoly capitalism. The effect on Northern Ireland will obviously be more extreme and the working class in self defence will look to the trade unions.

Trade Unions and Community Issues

However it is not enough to say this. It is necessary also to say what is the basis for a tactical programme that unites the variety of elements in the situation. We would argue that the key to broadening the base of trade union work in Northern Ireland lies in the corrollary of Castell's hypothesis that the success of reproductive struggle is dependent upon its organic links with contradictions in the sphere of production. That is the success of struggles in the productive sphere is dependent on the links that can be made with forces struggling with related contradictions in the sphere of reproduction. Let's illustrate this with an example. The gas industry in Northern Ireland, on which 2,000 jobs depend, is highly inefficient so that the cost of gas is more than 2½ times the British average. It is probable that the entire industry will collapse this year. The workforce are fighting the threat of redundancy by demanding the reorganisation of the industry and the importation of British natural gas which would significantly reduce the price to make it competitive. Gas consumers have been developing a similar set of demands in their concern to have reasonably priced gas. Another dimension is the fight against the Payment for Debt Amendment Order which was passed in June 1978 to enable deductions to be made from any social security benefit to pay off arrears of gas and electricity. Thus there is an issue whose 'depth' is such that it links the productive and the reproductive while questioning the use of emergency legislation at the same time. It is at this level that we see the particular value of trade union work since it raises the possibility of integrating these disparate areas of struggle and therefore of raising the class content of the entire issue.

It is important that such a perspective does not remain economistic and, of equal importance in Northern Ireland, addresses itself to the

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problems of repression and of discrimination. The role of emergency legislation is validated by the situation in which it is enacted and the status of those against whom it is directed. The history of the use of emergency legislation in Northern Ireland demonstrates how false this validation is. From the Special Powers Act to the Emergency Provisions and Prevention of Terrorism Acts, the implementation of such legislation has seen the widespread use of extraordinary powers. The interrogation methods and harassment of entire areas are well documented, less well known are the historical use of this legislation against trade unionists and its present incorporation, as in the case of the Payments for Debt Act, into social policy practice. This is a reality which trade unionists cannot ignore since it highlights the alternative possibilities for the regulation of the working class that the state can employ. In that respect, the persistent concern by the Northern Committee on the question of human rights and the unanimous support for a resolution at the Northern Conference in 1978 calling for the abolition of the Payments for Debt Act are important. The issue remains as one that the trade union movement will have to face. Moreover the historical problem of a Protestant/Catholic dual labour market has not been eradicated by recent anti-discrimination legislation. While individual acts of discrimination have decreased there have been some studies to indicate that the reproduction of work patterns has continued particularly through the recruitment of apprentices[15]. This is not an easy issue since by definition the effective implementation of anti-discrimination legislation will threaten previously assured employment prospects for some, in a high unemployment economy. It is not an issue that can be evaded. A comparison could be made with a situation in a British firm where the workforce felt threatened by the employment of Asian immigrants.. The fears may be real but so is the racism.

Within the whole process we see a special role for trades councils. Although still in an embryonic phase, the trades council movement has alrady shown itself capable of tackling important issues that straddle the productive and reproductive spheres. The Mid Ulster group of trades councils is currently organising broadly to fight the local effects of public expenditure cuts. The last battle against the increase in public sector rents was spearheaded by trades councils. Newtownabbey Trades Council has just completed an important review into Employers and Employment in East Antrim. Overall trades councils remain weak. However their potential as the organising base for broad struggle is enormous.

Conclusion

Finally we are aware that a defence of trade union work in Northern Ireland does not easily lead to a programme that would resolve the crisis. Indeed the forms of work on which we have commented are in no sense unusual nor do they have any particular nor immediate revolutionary signficance. However the evaluation of any form of work is crucially determined by the context in which that work takes place. Northern Ireland, as we have attempted to demonstrate, is a very exceptional context not only in terms of violence, repression and division but also in terms of the rapid economic deterioration, levels of public subvention and the history of the trade union movement. All of these must form the basis of an account of any form of work in Northern Ireland. And it is our contention that trade union work, for the reasons we have outlined, principally its relation structurally to the most signficant contradictions, offers the best opportunity for class work or even in attempting to realise the preconditions for class work.

[15] R Cormack, R Osborne and W Thompson, *Occupation, Choice and Placement of 16 year old School Leavers in Belfast*, forthcoming from the Fair Employment Agency.

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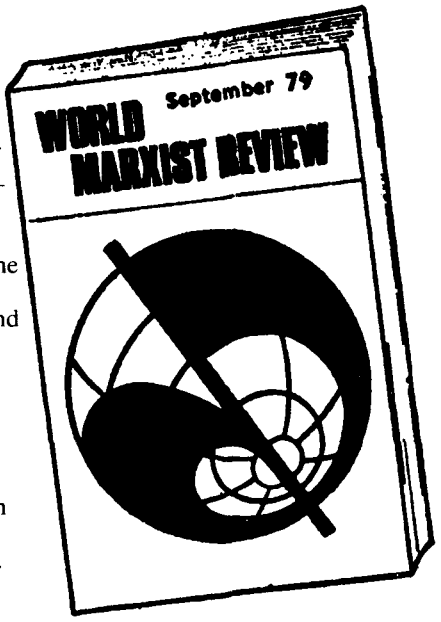

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Discussion

The Working Class and the Broad Democratic Alliance

1

John Peck

The Labour vote of 11,500,000 in October 1974 and May 1979 are the lowest, with one exception, since 1931. The electorate meantime has expanded, with the vote brought down to 18. 28% of the electorate voted Labour, the lowest since 1935. It was not Labour abstentions that produced the Thatcher triumph. 13,697,753 people voted Conservative, over three million more than in 1974. The propagation of the sharpest Tory ideas for years won over one milion votes from those who voted Liberal in 1974, and two million from new voters or those who abstained in 1974. An extremely serious situation that cannot be argued away. It must be faced up to and analysed.

Some think that after a sharp dose of Thatcherism, and the fight back against Tory policies, the millions will come flooding back. They did not in 1974 and there is no certainty they will in the future. In any case, if Labour is returned again only as a result of deep hatred of Toryism, we are back on the same merry-go-round.

There are signs that many Labour people can see the need for Labour to go back to its grass roots, to take up bread and butter issues amongst people, to argue for socialism. But this is material for a separate contribution. Here I wish to deal with the Communist response to the impasse.

Dave Cook and Mick Costello have both put forward strategies for the Communist Party in the present situation. But I must say frankly that when I read 'The Working Class and the Broad Democratic Alliance' in June, I had to go back and read Dave's article of last December. I was not sure if Mick and I had read the same article. To my mind Dave goes adequately into 'working class leadership', and develops several specific aspects of it.

Mick Costello, commenting on Dave Cook, says 'In that article on the Party and the advance to socialism, missing are the capitalist state and the programme's central objective of ending capitalist exploitation'.

Missing Ideas

Missing from the whole of Mick's article is the conception at the heart of the *British Road to Socialism* of transforming parliament, the body at the heart of the capitalist state, into a democratic instrument of the will of the people. Missing is any idea of what that means for our strategy now. Not once does he mention electoral strategy. He virtually discounts the serious decline in the Labour vote. He has nothing to say about its decline from, for example, the position of 1945. In fact one could almost describe his approach as a syndicalist one, ie, we will win Socialism via the Trade Union movement, waging basically an economic struggle. Except that Mick would add the need for Communist workplace organisation as vital to that process.

I'm far from satisfied with Dave Cook's handling of the question. But at least he says 'Left Labour Governments, with Communist representation in the Councils and in Parliament becoming an important factor, are seen as winning and rewinning the political majority'. At least his conception of 'working class leadership' extends to 'majorities won by a transformed Labour Party, and Communist representation' in the Councils and Parliament. In dealing with the Hackney experience he says 'A vital step in this process was the political argument for every branch to stand its own candidate in the local elections'.

If we are serious about transforming Parliament, we have to be serious now about what we are doing to have Communists elected to it. If we are serious about that, it means a revolution in our methods of work, in the independent presence of our party and its candidates. It means a recognition of the importance of local councils, both in their own right, and as a stepping stone, building up the Communist vote to the stage needed to win seats in Parliament.

There are magnificent examples of this in the experience of our comrades in France and Italy. In fact, *Red Bologne* is the best answer to Mick Costello's negative reference to the 'local state'. This is where most people come into contact with the state machine. This is where people can experience in microcosm Communist strategy put into practice.

Peter Smith (April *Marxism Today*) deals with the experience in Stepney in the thirties and forties, that led to a mass party, twelve Communist councillors, and a Communist MP. The party active as a party, with a clear independent presence, yet at the same time working in a broad way, in alliance with masses of people and their ogranisations.

The Bulwell Experience

Whilst in Bulwell we have weaknesses, we also have experience in trying to lift the work in the localities to the level of the work in industry, and to present the party in a public way. Our leading comrades are active in their trade unions and at work. They include three officers of Nottingham Trades Union Council. We discuss industrial questions in the branch committee. Comrades have been on the bakers' picket line, marched with the firemen, etc.

At the same time we discuss issues affecting Bulwell, and Nottingham as a whole; tenants' problems, road safety issues, flood prevention, rates, community facilities, and a whole host of others. We aim always both to develop the widest activity by many people and organisations, and to make clear the Communist point of view, especially with the candidate as the spokesman.

Important too is the activity on national and international questions. Signatures have been collected on several occasions in Bulwell market, eg, against rising prices and against the neutron bomb. National leaflets are given out. Twice the area has been covered completely with our own leaflet, answering specific anti-communist arguments that have come up on the doorstep. We have tried persistently to explain our goal of socialism at every meeting. We had a sale of 350 of the *British Road* broadsheets as an essential preliminary to the General Election. Seventy *Morning Stars* every weekend are invaluable in both raising political consciousness and in a weekly point of contact over the area.

Running like a thread through all our activity is the theme of building the Communist vote. From early beginnings similar to most other areas in Britain, votes in the hundreds, it has been built steadily. In the past five local elections it has been in four figures. Three times we have come fairly close to winning a seat. True, this was with electors having two votes. But when this year we put forward two candidates, the second won 415, better than was achieved in the first seventeen contests in the ward.

To vote Communist is the most natural thing in Bulwell. One would have to be over thirty years old to remember when no Communist stood. People locally could just not understand why there was no Communist in the recent EEC elections.

Humbly we believe we have adjusted our methods of work to our long term strategy. Nothing exceptional applies to Bulwell. What limited results have been obtained could apply elsewhere. If they did, if we had

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fifty or a hundred wards with four figure votes, if the week-end sales of our splendid eight pager were 5,000, as it could be, we'd be in a different ball-game (the answer to Brian Nicholl's problem of difficulty in making week-end readers is to have this linked to all the work in the locality).

What Needs to be Done

We need to distil all that is best from our recent and past experience in a variety of areas in Britain. We can learn from abroad, not only from France and Italy, but also West Germany and elsewhere. Then apply it in practice.

We must end the split between the industrial and other work, link all aspects together. Workplace branches yes, but not isolated from localities. Workplace branches with members also linked to the branch where they live. Workplace branches that lead the way on local issues, above all at elections.

Immediate industrial struggles on wages and other issues do start workers on 'a very rich path'. But it will only lead somewhere if the Communists involved in those struggles are also candidates for local councils and for Parliament, seeking the political backing of those they have led industrially.

Both in workplace and area, vigorous propagation of Socialist ideas is essential. Socialist nationalisation as opposed to capitalist, Socialism and the individual, Socialism and freedom, Socialism and the environment, Socialism and peace. Perhaps above all the argument that socialism is as native to Britain as fish and chips.

There is no contradiction between a greater Communist presence as a Party, and unity with Labour. All experiences show that in fact the two go together, that real unity develops better in such circumstances. A Party with mass standing and substantial votes gains far more respect.

Whilst we have had the *British Road* and its basic concepts for over twenty years, only in 1977 did we thrash them out fully. In that sense it was a radical departure. Now we have the task of changing elsewhere too, our structure, our methods of work, our attitudes, our priorities, if it is to become reality. Not change for change's sake, but because it is essential.

2

Bert Pearce

The 1977 Communist Party Congress, after a process of discussion many of us felt to be a welcome further advance in the democracy of the party, produced a new edition of our programme, the *British Road to Socialism*. This also we welcomed as a decisive defeat for sectarian ideas, and a new weapon for clarity and effective united action by the party.

The two years since have shown that this expectation was not quite so easy to fulfil. Indeed rather than unity, we have met with experiences, unexpected to many in the party, of new and different divisions, and fierce polemics over just what the new elements in this *British Road* are, and how they should be put into effect.

In *Marxism Today* we have had a series of stimulating discussions, inevitably overlapping in their subject matter and analysis. (Articles and consequent contributions by Dave Cook, Graham Taylor, Dave Priscott, Eric Hobsbawm, Mick Costello, Andrew Chester and others).

This digging into our history, and into the origins of our basic ideas, is a welcome and healthy process, part of the renewal of the party, and of Marxism, which is always essential, but not always given the attention it demands. It is also a difficult and sensitive job. The life and thought of the party has been the life and thought of countless comrades, who sometimes find it a bit difficult to recognise themselves, their actions and motivations in what emerges from the historians who have been studying the time from the texts. Often the new history throws a flood of light on the situations in which we had to act and react. Pleasant or not, this is refreshing and adds strength through our understanding of our defeats and victories.

But is is also possible for elements of caricature and selective academic analysis to creep in, which may astonish and antagonise, and even drive further from an understanding, many solid and courageous comrades who know their ideas and actions were not quite like that . . . . . but how are they to cope with the growing flood of research, revelations, quotations and analysis?

This is what places a big responsibility on us all. We all need to take part in this process of deepening our knowledge of our own party's life. Only so can we find good answers to to-day's problems. Only so can we go to the people with the honesty, conviction and self-confidence which in my experience has always been the characteristic of Communists, and the quality most admitted and admired in us by our friends, and grudgingly by our enemies.

We are clearly into a period of mounting mass action and political debate. Our concepts are being tested now, both in action and in the relevance of our theory.

The Recent Debates

That is why I find these articles, the more historical and the more topical, overlap and the estimations of present policies tend to relate to judgements of the past. It is also why if my first reaction is one of stimulation, my second is a concern about the tendency to too great a polarisation, an artificial counter-posing of elements of our strategy which in our thinking and in life must be inter-related.

For instance if we see an alternative economic strategy as somehow diminishing the significance of the wages struggle, accentuating its 'economic narrowness' rather than mobilising its power as the driving force for a programme of wider objectives, then we do not help to solve 'sectionalism' but open up further division.

If we view the 'community politics' element of the broad democratic alliance, as somehow 'more political' than the struggle for wages or conditions, or jobs in the workplace, again we weaken the class core of our democratic struggle, rather than using the new concepts to unify and strengthen them both, as must happen in life.

This was the point I thought Sam Aaronovitch missed in his (September) counter-arguments against Mick Costello's article (June). He says that the Costello article 'continues the tradition of narrow economism' and also that he 'largely ignores the Labour Party and the importance of changing it' and 'leaves us with only the Communist Party and the Trade Unions as the main agents . . . . a massive retreat from the *British Road to Socialism*'.

It would be indeed, if it were true. But it is not. Costello begins on the 'living link between the unions and the Labour Party' and ends with a page on the effect of trade union struggles in the internal politics of the Labour Party, and the need of 'building political consciousness on a scale to decide favourably the outcome of the struggle between Left and Right for the leadership of the Labour Movement'.

The main weight of Costello's article (as of Dave Priscott's earlier contribution) was in no way to dispute the new vistas and new styles of work opened up for trade union and party work, by the concept of the broad democratic alliance, to which Dave Cook's article made many useful indications. What they aimed, I think correctly, to do was to overcome the serious imbalance in that article (and even more so elsewhere) which very much diminishes such basic issues as the

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political significance of the wages struggle, trade union rights, the defence of jobs, and the central problem of capitalist state power.

To keep the balance and relationship between such fundamental questions as the wages struggle, the social contract and jobs, and all the vast spread of issues in our economic strategy and the entire field of democratic rights, living standards, peace, the environment and so on, has never been easy. But we fail to do it at our peril.

The Wages Struggle

The situation now spells it out. Already, in reply to Tory attacks on living standards, the wages struggle has emerged as a key factor in the political situation, the most powerful direct threat to the Tory government and its strategy. Hundreds of thousands of workers are already in action (many to the surprise of their leaders); millions more are lining up to come into the wages battle behind them.

But far from this being a 'narrowly economist' concern either of the trade unions or of the Communists or the labour movement, there is also mass action, demonstrations and industrial action on a growing scale against the cuts, against closures, and job losses, for a new energy policy, against racialism and apartheid and much more.

The role of the trade union movement and workshop organisation has been essential in beginning to consolidate local councils and communities into resistance to the cuts.

To list these facts demonstrates the folly of trying to isolate or curtail the wages movement, rather than seeing it as the most powerful mobilising force, a spearhead for the whole frontal offensive for higher living standards. But that is a long way from arguing that such unity of purpose, let alone the potential for political changes in government policies, is grasped by most of those involved.

There are real problems here, well beyond the production of paper policies. At this time, when the tactics of uniting the varied streams of fight back against the Tories is a prime concern, we should remember the important advances actually made in working out detailed alternative economic strategies, not only by our party, but by many key trade unions as well. To cite only NUPE, it was in 1976, the year of the massive 80,000 London March and Lobby against the then cuts, that NUPE produced its excellent policy booklet *Time to Change Course*. This was a coherent, sound programme not just for the jobs of NUPE members, but for the entire British economy.

Why did it not make a bigger impact even than it did? And why when the public sector workers were in the firing line for their £60 last winter, and being accused of wrecking the Labour government, hitting at the schools, hospitals and so on, why was this convincing policy for the people's needs not brought out to back up the union's case that their members' wages were part of the fight for our social services?

I commend a study of Irene Swan's full account (Communist Party's *Economic Bulletin* No 5, Spring 1979) of how NUPE developed its economic policy, and the problems in using it.

But clearly the question we have to attack is not whether wages, or other democratic rights are 'more political' or 'more important'. It is rather how to bring them together and popularise the idea that each section does not have to fight alone, that there are in fact other economic and social policies which could lead out of the jungle, and could begin to meet the needs of those fighting for higher wages and those wanting to lower prices, fares and rents; those resisting cuts in social services and those wanting more investment and more jobs and shorter hours in industry.

One thing this seems to demand is that at the very time when any section of workers is at the height of action for wages, then is the time when the resources of the unions (as well as our political parties) should be publicising to their own members and to the country at large the alternative economic strategy which justifies their wage claim, and of which it forms a vital part. Engineers are not just in action now for more pay and shorter hours. They are fighting for more goods to be bought, more jobs to be created, more openings for young workers. The miners' claim is not just for them, it is to ensure this country's coal supplies in the years of world energy crisis which lie ahead.

Such an approach not only begins to express the leading role of the working class in the interests of the whole people in an economic sense. It opens up, instead of counterposing, a positive and fruitful relation between the immense power of the wages movement (in all sections of the working class, new and older, as Costello points out) and all the potential of the democratic movements which are so excitingly advancing new frontiers for the liberation of women, for the involvement of our communities in the creative development of all that makes up our environment and the quality of our lives, for the creation of a truly multi-racial, humane society.

The 'New' in the BRS

Dave Priscott rightly pointed out that by only selecting and building around some of the 'new' elements of the 1978 edition of the *British Road*, we could fall into a reformist distortion of the essence of the programme as a whole. I think this is an important point which can usefully go even further. We have the key job of getting the ideas of the *British Road* understood and applied both by all that is best in our party, and in the Labour and progressive movement.

In tackling this job, the debate and the new concepts worked out in 1977/78 give us key new weapons whose importance cannot be overestimated. Most significantly new perhaps were the working out of the idea of revolutionary change as a process, and the analysis of how a new kind of Labour government, a government of the Left, could be the next major step, opening up a quite new stage of political development.

Other concepts, such as the broad democratic alliance, and the ways in which the ruling class maintains its leadership in society — thinking which had been within the mainstream of our policy for a long time — were elaborated and given a theoretical clarity of great importance for our practice.

I make this distinction because I feel that if we try to over-extend the area specified as 'totally new' in the present *British Road* we shall raise artificial barriers and hinder rather than help the appreciation and practice of what really is new, as well as a great deal that has been best in our history.

It can lead us to undervalue too much of our previous work as dogmatic, sectarian, narrowly economist; at the same time by taking great areas of work in which we have had a rich experience for many years and bundling them together under the heading of 'new ideas, or new methods' virtually born or at least reborn out of the 1978 BRS, we blur the edges of what are really the new and fruitful advances of our thought. Yet it is the sharpening of just these ideas, of the revolutionary process, and the potential stages of left governments, which we need most of all to give sense and coherence to our present policies, and all that is so sound and deeply rooted in our historic experience.

Our branches need help in how to campaign for sure. But much more they need the clear conviction of *why* to campaign, the relation of mass democratic work to any decisive political progress and to socialism.

A Long Tradition

There is space only to indicate fragments of what come to mind in the course of this whole discussion. The roots of our programme go far back, right into the origins of our party and before. For fifty years their development has been a complex and contradictory one. A deep devotion to popular democracy and creative, fearless Marxism, co-existed and

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interacted with rigidity, dogmatism and over-mechanical 'Soviet imitationism'.

To use the shorthand of people and names — one has only to think (and re-read!) Dona Torr's marvellous study of Tom Mann to see the making of the modern revolutionary out of the amalgam of people's rights through the centuries, William Morris's passionate assertion of the nature of Socialism, Art and Culture, and the Marxist exposition of class struggle.

But follow Morris, (and Engels and the Chartists) and Tom Mann, through Pollitt, Gallacher, Horner, Gollan, McLennan and one is signposting a party life which was full of contradictions, but never lost its roots in the democratic aspirations of the British working class and labour movement (badly dented though they may have been at times).

This is why for instance combine committees with positive policies for their industries (and for their communities) were not invented since 1977. In the 1930s United Front policies to Save South Wales drew together community-wide movements with radical programmes. Policies for developing Britain's coal and energy industries are part of our heritage.

In the Popular Front period before the war, as well as in the post-war 1945 period, much was explored in the field of transitional programmes, and specific economic policies. *Britain without capitalists* pointed beyond the formal pattern of a *Soviet Britain* as did so much of the political and cultural expansion which the Popular Front programmes required.

It was in the 1950s that I remember with the Midlands Communists working out such policies as *Men and Motors*, produced by a great deal of collective drafting in factory, university and District Committee — as well as the Austin Morris Combine Stewards, and the Engineers Confederation, working on policies for their indudstries which were basic to the mass concept that unemployment and redundancy were not inevitable and should be met by mass resistance, strikes and occupations.

In the same period much work was done for the reclaiming of British culture for the people. Policies for Welsh and Scottish national rights were elaborated. The UCS, Triang and Deep Duffryn (again just to mention a few) were struggles which involved whole communities and related immediate issues to the quality of life society provides.

To mention all this, does not deny, but very much emphasises the need for the new thinking and new strategic concepts of the *British Road*. But don't let us over-simplify the problem, or we shall find the wrong answer. The counter-posing of a 'conspiracy — puppet master theory,' of capitalist ideological grip, against a new theory of 'voluntary acceptance of capitalist hegemony' puts too crude a picture to be convincing.

We were brought up (however inadequately) to some conception of how capitalist ideas permeated society, through the family, the factory, the school, and the very relations of social existence. The idea that politics was to be found, and worked at, in the Fishing Club, the Austin Chess Club, in sport, and music, was not foreign to us thirty years ago.

What the years of unresolved theoretical prospects did was to prevent us grasping how so many of these splendid mass qualities and fundamentally democratic approaches of our movement in Britain could be focused on effective political change.

A clearer estimation of what has been sound in our experience will help to dispose of the unsound and rally all our forces for the advances we all seek.

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Reviews

POLITICS AND LETTERS: Interviews with *New Left Review* Raymond Williams

New Left Books 1979. 390pp.
Hardback £12.75.

In form (it's well over 400 pages long) this is an unusual book, being the well-edited reproduction of a series of interviews of taped discussions between the 'subject' — Raymond Williams — and three members of the editorial committee of *New Left Review*. It is a form which has been used in recent years in the more directly political statements of such writers as Regis Debray and Santiago Carillo and, indeed, in articles in *Marxism Today*; but this is a more ambitious enterprise, in the sense that, though quite complex theoretical issues are included, a good deal of the genuine flexibility and mutual enrichment of good discussion gets across. I don't think the danger of such a form — the imposing of a suspiciously 'rigged' pattern by the 'interrogators' — is altogether avoided; but in general the dialogue form has encouraged a more direct, unaffected and open kind of talk and language than either the average article in *NLR* or Williams himself have often managed to achieve individually. That the discipline of clear communication imposed on both sides of the dialogue-form should have so successful and desirable an outcome is in itself a suggestive and encouraging fact.

One doesn't want, however, to overdo the question of form, important as it is. The main thing about this interesting, and in many ways impressive book is that it helps us come to terms with the still developing contribution to socialist thinking of an impressive man. If it also helps him, that constitutes a bonus from which we shall all gain.

For many years, and especially since the publication of *Culture and Society* in 1958, Raymond Williams has been well-known as a writer and teacher in the fields of adult and university education as well as a novelist. Since 1961 he has taught in the English Faculty at Cambridge. For a short time, as a student, he was a member of the Communist Party and he has never been in the derogatory sense an anti-communist; but for the most part his more direct political 'interventions' have been in the New Left area. That area itself, however, has not been without its internal complications. One of its strands, from the first, was an emphasis on 'cultural' investigation and politics (often in reaction to what was felt to be a 'Stalinist' crudification of the relation between what Marx called 'base' and 'superstructure'). This 'culturist' strand which, among much else, paid a good deal of attention to the 'Britishness' of the Left radical tradition, led its adherents to an attitude of simultaneous sympathy with and revulsion from other features of the New Left. On the one hand a socialist like Raymond Williams clearly found the New left ambiance sympathetic in the sense that it was less closely tied up than the Communist Party with immediate power-struggles, national and international, and their strategies and tactics, and therefore more 'open' when it came to theoretical speculation or political experiment. At the same time the deeply-ingrained sectarianism of Trotskyist politics and the increasingly obsessive interest of much of the New Left in various highly theoreticist and academic forms of continental Marxism (themselves often based in cultural situations and traditions not at all easily reconcilable with a homespun 'Britishness') could not be very sympathetic initially to someone as consciously rooted in 'England-and-Wales' and the Leavisite principle of the 'concreteness' of literature as Williams. The present book has emerged from the tangle of contradictory trends within — and also outside — New Left thinking. One of the many good things about the whole enterprise is that the stock-taking has been conducted with a good deal of objectivity and no-one concerned has allowed the search for fruitfully uniting concepts and formulations to be dominated by what can, fatally, seem to be an easy basis for such unity — hostility to the communist parties, even the most vulnerable ones.

What in fact this bood seeks to do is (i) to clarify Williams's books by drawing out the main emphases in each and examining their more problematic aspects, (ii) to probe for connecting links between his various books, experiences and interests and (iii) to examine his work as a whole in terms of its development and its relevance as a socialist response to our time.

The biographical section which opens the book offers many fascinating insights, not merely of the more personal sort (like war-experiences) but also of a more general and speculative kind. For instance, it emerges as quite significant that Raymond Williams should have gone to Cambridge in October 1939 (as opposed to, say, 1937) and joined the Communist Party during the 'phoney war' period. Had he been a very few years older the student movement in which he became involved would itself have been different, fired and dominated by the need to rouse and unite people to recognise and oppose the direct threat of fascism. Williams says very little about the anti-fascist struggle and refers to the popular front with some distaste. And though he was to modify the political starting-point from which he confronted Cambridge — socialist revolution *before* you could defeat fascism — that emphasis gives his thought the flavour of a different generation from that of the thirties and suggest why he came, in the fifties, to feel closer to the younger socialist of the New Left than to those whose most vivid experiences were centred on attempts to build a wide unity against the main enemy.

It is also from the biographical area of *Politics and letters* that there first emerges a theoretical emphasis that turns out to be very central to Raymond William's achievement as a whole. At one point in the book he speaks of basing his work on 'the indissoluble unity of personal and social experience'. What becomes clear is that not only his work in general but his *style* itself, with its tendency (outside the novels) towards a complex, indirect, and rather heavy impersonality and a reliance on the passive voice, has to be seen as part and parcel of the attempt to realise this conviction.

It's impossible in a short review to do justice to the sections in which Williams's books of cultural and literary criticism are discussed in detail. The details are themselves of great interest: he seems to me splendid on Hardy, excellent on Orwell; I am less certain about the treatment of Ibsen and Brecht. But what is specially valuable — quite apart from the impressive range of reading and scholarship — is the bringing out of connections between one area of activity and another, which clarify both, as when the work on modern drama is linked and contrasted with the problems of novel-criticism and concepts like 'structure of feeling' and 'the knowable community' examined in the light of developments both social and literary. The whole discussion of realism and naturalism, again, with its many links (both appreciative and critical) with the work of Lukács, strikes me as very useful. So is the recurrent examination of the activity known to students of Eng Lit as 'Practical Criticism'. Threading its way right through the whole volume is a figure which readers who have never made an academic study of literature (especially at Cambridge) may find rather hard to know what to make of: you might call it the ghost of Dr Leavis. For it is in the course of emancipating himself from the powerful influence of Leavis that Raymond Williams has made some of his own most fruitful contributions.

If I find something missing, especially in the directly political arts of this book, it is a sufficient sense of what actual political activity, the organising of people to change

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the world they live in, involves in practice. I say this with diffidence. Raymond Williams is not afraid of politics and makes many shrewd observations about political issues and tactics: yet one does sense in his attitudes and language a certain distance from the practicalities of day-to-day politics and in particular a certain unwillingness to recognise (what I'm sure he does in theory) that it is political parties, not political ideas as such, that actually change society. I find it a bit strange that in so humane and political a book by a man so conscious of his working-class allegiances no working-class politician — Labour, Communist or what-have-you — is referred to with any really close sympathy. I'm certainly not wanting to pose political practice *against* political ideas: obviously you can't have one without the other; nor to imply that Raymond Williams, whom I respect very much, lives in some sort of ivory tower. He doesn't and it's not nearly as simple as that; and in any case anyone who has long been a member of a communist party must be all too conscious of the opposite danger of permitting the pragmatic aspects of Marxism to take over.

I come back to the question of style because, like Raymond Williams, I am myself deeply convinced that the content and the form of effective writing, as of effective action, are inseparable and that the finding of ways to talk to one another is one of the most important *political* problems and tasks of the socialist movement.

Raymond Williams says at one point that what kept him at a distance from the Communist Party after the war was 'the style of work of the Party', by which he means the 'manipulation and centralism'. I understand this reaction, especially since he links it in particular with the Party's readiness at that period to fall so confidently into line with the Soviet Union on an issue like Yugoslavia. Yet there is another aspect of the style of work of the Communist Party which is also worth attention and that has been an effort — at its best — to bring together workers and intellectuals on the basis of a shared respect and a shared language. I don't say that effort has always been successful, nor do I wish to respond to a book I have found valuable, stimulating and moving by a new sort of reiteration of old divergences. But it has struck me, studying this most interesting (though terribly expensive) book, that if, as many of us believe, the Communist Party should not be afraid of changing its style, neither should the New Left. And it's not least because I see encouraging signs of this within *Politics and Letters* that I find Raymond Williams's book so welcome.

Arnold Kettle

THE MAKING OF A RULING CLASS: TWO CENTURIES OF CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT ON TYNESIDE

Benwell Community Project, Final Report Series No. 6.

Benwell Community Project,
85 Adelaide Terrace,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE4.
1979 121pp. Paperback £1.50

This is one of the most penetrating and compelling studies of the British ruling class to appear for a long time. It examines the activities of a dozen of the richest Tyneside families from the early 19th century, and is indeed the only study to look in detail at how a particular segment of capital in Britain has developed from the industrial revolution to present-day state monopoly capitalism.

On the evidence they find its authors decisively support the continuing relevance of the concept of the ruling class and reject suggestions that contemporary Britain has either an 'open elite' or that the ownership of capital no longer implies control.

To quote: 'with the growing concentration of control in the economy, there has been a significant diffusion of power; no longer do a few individual dynasties visibly control the factories, the banks and the local council. But what clearly emerges from examining the 1930s and the post-war years of state intervention is not an erosion of dynastic influence but rather a subtle accommodation to change, which has enabled individual family members to move into commanding positions within the region and within the wider national economy'.

Power is still exercised by capital. The state continues to respond.

The great merit of this study, however, is to demonstrate in detail how this happens and to enable us to identify changes and discontinuities in the way in which capitalist rule is exercised.

Take the Ridleys. Orginally Newcastle bankers, they were MPs for the city through most of the 18th century. Developing interests in coal and heavy engineering they continued to sit as MPs for Northemberland constituencies throughout the 19th century with the first Viscount Ridley becoming Home Secretary in 1895. Today the fourth Viscount has important interests in Barclays' Bank, the Northern Rock Building Society and Swan Hunter and serves, like his father before him, as chairman of Northumberland County Council. His brother, the ill-famed Nicholas Ridley MP, is one of the main architects, along with Keith Joseph, of the new hardline Tory industrial policy.

The Cookson family repeats roughly the same story. Coalowners and bankers 150 years ago, R A Cookson currently chairs the Lead Industries Group, is a director of Lloyds Bank and chairman of the Northern Industrial Development Board. The Bosanquets, Peases, Anguses, Bensons and Stephensons show similar patterns over two centuries.

What, then, are the main changes which the authors discern in the *forms* of capitalist exploitation over this period?

Four principal phases seem to emerge. The formative period of the late 18th century saw the long established merchant dynasties of Newcastle moving out to establish dominance over the surrounding coal industry. From this base heavy engineering and shipbuilding was developed in the second half of the century with much of the capital for Armstrong's armaments combine being supplied by a cohesive network of coal-owners and bankers.

During both these periods Tyneside's families were firmly rooted in the locality, exercised power through local institutions and directly, often viciously as in 1844, confronted the problems of class rule. Later in the century, however, the authors note a growing tendency to diversify investment, establish overseas subsidiaries, push money into property development and nurture links with London banking. Interwar this tendency grew apace. Most of these families successfully jumped from heavy industry, sinking fast in the world depression, to investment trusts, public utilities, land, banking and a few select areas of monopolised manufacturing (like the Lead Industries Group).

Post-war they emerge, newly enriched with the royalties of coal nationalisation, to act as intermediaries in the north east for British-based banks and big business. Now securely positioned within both the merchant banks of the City of London and the property companies and councils of the north east, they direct the development of new towns, transport systems and universities. And with a clarity rare in works on this country, the authors show just how this tight network of political and family influence fits together to enable the direction and milking of non-monopoly, small investor capital in joint stock banks and building societies.

This is not to say that this study is not without a few, mostly inevitable weaknesses. On the evidence of these families it tends to present the rise and progress of the big bourgeoisie as something continuous and inevitable. It does not, and possibly could not, examine those families that failed to

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make the grade, and is thereby unable to get a really precise focus on the crucial periods of crisis and discontinuity (like the 1920s). It is also unable to weight the relative importance of north east capital against other centres and particularly within London-based British finance capital today (how far are the Cooksons and Ridleys just regional message boys?). Finally, although it certainly illumines a segment of the ruling class, it can only obliquely reveal the relationship between the ruling class and the state and the processes by which the state responds to the needs of capital as a whole.

However, as long as we are clear about the limits of the approach adopted, this booklet will prove of invaluable assistance in understanding the society in which we live. Lavishly illustrated, and priced at £1.50, it should be in the pocket of every Marxist agitator and educator in the country.

John Foster

STATE HOUSING IN BRITAIN

Stephen Merrett

Routledge, Keegan and Paul. £6.95. Pp376

It has been a curious feature of the attitude of the left in Britain towards the 'Welfare State' that there has been little serious analysis of the nature of state intervention in social welfare. The relationship between the impact of class struggle and the necessities of economics is still obscure, and this has led to an ambiguity among the left in characterising social welfare either as a direct concession won by class struggle or as a reform willingly conceded in order to maintain the legitimacy of the capitalist state, or as a development necessary to capital in order to produce a more highly skilled labour force. There has been a connected tendency in political practice to limit demands to calls for 'more of the same' or for 'at least as much of the same' in periods of cuts, and a deep reluctance to criticise the shortcomings and inadequacies of the existing provision for fear of underwriting the criticism from the right of the inefficiency, bureaucracy and paternalism of the Welfare State itself.

The author of this book was for a number of years the original convenor of the Political Economy of Housing Workshop, a sub-group of the Conference of Socialist Economists, and one of the most successful examples in recent years of a fruitful, non-sectarian discussion group on the left. The two publications of the Workshop, *Political Economy and the Housing Question* (1975) and *Housing and Class in Britain* (1976) give a selection of the early papers presented to the Workshop, while the Direct Labour Collective, itself a sub-group of the Workshop, has published in *Building with Direct Labour* (1978) the only serious study of direct labour construction currently in existence.

In view of this rapid development of housing research with a Marxist orientation, the publication of this book, representing four years of research, is all the more disappointing.

This sense of disappointment stems in part from the ambiguous nature of the project itself: the author describes the subject of the book as 'the local authority housing sector in Britain' although the book actually deals with the more limited field of government policy formulation for investment and subsidy and the actual economics of the development process in land, construction and finance, while the title of the book itself, *State Housing in Britain* implies a study of the broader problem of state intervention in housing in Britain.

The author is not unaware of this problem, and has gone some way to provide a more coherent picture of the totality. In particular one of the most interesting chapters in the book, contributed by Fred Gray, is entitled 'Consumption: council house management' and gives a good summary of the problems of the selection and allocation process that admits people to the state housing sector and the professional or political ideologies that form the outlook of the managers of state housing in the local councils.

The book contains a clear and precise analysis of the evolution and development of government policy towards investment in local authority housing and its financing through the subsidy system. The account is however largely based on secondary sources, and lacks the stimulus which a direct study of the papers now available under the thirty-year rule would give of the actual considerations of state policy which operated on the politicians and civil servants at the time. This is an unfortunate weakness, which results in the curious ambiguity of the author's analysis of the state. After a coherent and detailed account which links the level of investment in local authority housing and the changes in the subsidy system to the fluctuations in the national economy as a primary determinant, the author proceeds to quote and reject the formulation of the *Communist Manifesto:* 'The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie' in favour of emphasising the relative autonomy of the state from capital!

It is the theoretical sections of the book which expose its weaknesses, rather than the empirical account of policy and its formation. The theoretical content indeed is often attached to a chapter as part of a didactic summary rather than forming an integrated part of the conception.

The author describes himself as belonging to a school of economic thought bringing together Ricardo, Marx, Kalecki and Keynes which he describes as the 'Anglo-Italian' school. It would be unfair to these writers however to ascribe to them the curious definition of exploitation as 'any social process which permits the owners of private property, whether it be real or financial, to appropriate part of the flow of national income so as to increase the value in constant prices of their capital'. This definition, which would now admit as exploitation the process of buying cheap and selling dear, allows the author to conclude that council tenants are only 'exploited' in paying rent when subsidies are less than the 'real' rate of interest. Since this has never occurred, the author concludes that council tenants are not exploited as tenants, but only as wage-workers.

The weakest section of the book is undoubtedly the final chapter, where the author puts forward proposals for the housing strategy to be pursued by a socialist government, defined as 'a Labour government committed to a major democratic transformation of British society by means of a transitional programme with a coherent socialist goal' and pursuing an alternative economic strategy. The weaknesses of this chapter are twofold. Firstly, the author is proposing solutions to problems currently being experienced, while any process of struggle likely to lead to the election of a left government will in itself transform radically the nature of the problems to be solved: for example, a solution to the problem of housing finance which is relevant to the current reality is unlikely to be applicable to a left government coming to power after a period of catastrophic inflation, or after a further long period of recession and de-industrialisation. Secondly, the proposals which the author puts forward tend towards an abstract instrumentalism of the state: there is too much made of the need for surveys and statistics by comparison with the process of decision, with the transformation of popular power. This revolution from the top down, not from the bottom up.

The criticism made of Sir William Beveridge by Beatrice Webb is apposite: 'He agrees that there must be a revolution in the nature of society; but it must be guided by persons with training and knowledge — ie by himself and those he chooses as his colleagues'.

It should be noted however that the author has at least made a coherent proposal, which is more than any other individual or group on the left has done to date.

Mike Jones

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Democratic Charter

Mike Seifert writes: It has been said of the present Tory government that no government this century has shown so much genuine compassion for the very, very rich. The privilege of paying for this generosity and for attempting to resolve the economic crisis has been bestowed, once again, on the working people. And once again attacks on the rights of trade unionists are at the centre of an unsavoury package of reactionary measures which strike at the quality of life of far wider sections of society.

In this atmosphere of rising class conflict the close relationship between the class struggle and the struggle for democratic rights is again thrown into sharp focus. Just as almost every important extension of civil liberties has, in the past, been spearheaded by the organised working class, so any government whose business it is to impose unpopular economic and social measures must first attempt to sap the strength of the labour movement, and then pick off other rights and liberties.

The right wing of the labour movement is attempting to confine the anti-Tory struggle to the limited goal of returning a facsimile of the last Labour government. In doing so they are trying to guide the struggle into purely defensive positions — no more cuts in health and education (already cut to the bone by Healey and Callaghan): no more increases in unemployment; no more restrictions on immigration nor attacks on abortion rights etc. The left wing has already stated clearly that it intends to lead a fight which will sweep right wing Labour policies away with the Tories. The outcome of the struggle against the Tories will again be shaped by the left / right balance of forces in the labour movement — with the left looking beyond the defeat of this Government to an alternative economic policy and an extension of democratic rights.

It is therefore timely to remind ourselves of a document published by the Communist Party earlier this year. *A Charter of Democratic Rights* (CPGB, 30p) is an attempt to bring out in detail the links between the successes of the working class in the class struggle and the extension of civil liberties. The preamble to the Charter develops the argument that the defence and extensions of democratic rights is 'central to the struggle for socialism in Britain'. The body of the document lists some 70 fundamental rights under different headings — such as 'Economic and Social Rights'; 'Political Rights'; 'Artistic Rights'. The Charter does not aspire to provide the last word on the subject: it is presented for discussion in the labour movement and elsewhere.

With the intensification of the anti-Tory struggle and the sharpening of the left / right struggle in the labour movement, the Charter will assist in developing the wider perspectives the left requires if fundamental advances are to be made.

Franz Marek 1913-1979

Eric Hobsbawm writes: Franz Marek — he kept the name chosen when he went into illegality — died peacefully on holiday this summer in his sixty seventh year. He was little known in Britain, but his life was commemorated not only in the journals of the Spanish and Italian Communist Parties (the latter sent a representative to his funeral), but by various figures of the international Marxist left, and in France, as well as, of course, in his own country, Austria. He was a remarkable man. Born in Ephraim Feuerlicht in Galicia in 1913, he grew up in great poverty in Vienna where, after a youthful spell as a Zionist and then sympathiser with Austro-Marxism, he joined the Communist Party after the defeat of the workers' rising in 1934.

He rapidly became a responsible functionary and head of the Austrian Party's illegal apparatus. After the occupation of Austria by Hitler he was sent to Paris, where he assisted Artur London, in leading the French Party's resistance organisation for foreign workers resident in that country. Their role in the Resistance was both enormous and particularly dangerous. Franz' responsibilities included work among the occupying German forces. He was captured, sentenced to death, but saved — on the night of execution — by the liberation of Paris in 1944. After the war he returned to Vienna, where he took his place in the leadership of the Communist Party and as editor of its theoretical journal *Weg und Ziel.* After the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 the Austrian Party, largely inspired by Marek and his friend Ernst Fischer, briefly (and in line with numerous other CPs including ours) condemned the invasion, but soon reversed its attitude, sacrificing many of its most eminent militants, including Marek. For the last ten years of his life, increasingly in poor health, he edited the independent Marxist *Wiener Tagebuch,* while maintaining close contacts with Marxists in other countries, notably in Italy. He did much to introduce the ideas of Gramsci into the German-speaking world.

Marek was both activist and theoretician. His most important works are *Philosophy of World Revolution* (translated into English) and *What Stalin Really Said, What Marx Really Said* and *What Lenin Really Said* (the last two written jointly with Ernst Fischer. He helped to plan and write a collective history of Marxism, of which the first two volumes (up to 1914) have appeared in Italian. His writing was characterised by great conciseness, lucidity of analysis, lack of rhetoric and a readiness to confront new ideas, facts and situations. He taught by example. Throughout his life as a Bolshevik he tried to combine theory and practice. He devoted his existence to changing the world in the belief, often expressed, that under socialism men and women should live not only better than under capitalism but differently. All the material possessions he left at his death could be packed into two suitcases.

Whose London?

Marjorie Mayo writes; The Tory Housing Minister's announcement of the establishment of an Urban Development Corporation for London's Docklands is depressingly symptomatic. Heseltine, dubbed by the *Financial Times* as the property developers' best friend, clearly intends to create the climate for a boom in private investment in Inner City areas like London's East End. Any public investment will have to be justified to the Treasury in terms of its potential profitability — certainly not on the basis of meeting social needs. Meanwhile, the other arm of the Tory pincers, the Governments' expenditure cuts, are specifically intended to represent a significant retreat in the level and quality of public services. In fact, the entire fabric of the welfare state, as we know it, is under attack. The impact of these twin policies is potentially devastating, further shifting the entire class balance of London.

The LDCP's booklet — *London for the People* (published in April this year) represents a crucial launching pad for the process of analysing both how London's present governers 'act on the behest and in the interests of their big business masters' and how 'mass democratic participation by the people and their organisations can change the situation, so that London really can become London for the People'.

The booklet sets out, in accessible and readable form, the major campaigning issues in employment, housing, transport and the social services and leisure provision, together with a section on politics and participation, which includes consideration of the role of the Communist Party itself in community campaigns.

If the present Tory attacks are to be resisted effectively, it is urgent that *London for the People* is backed up with further work at two levels. First, the theoretical framework must be taken forward, especially in relation to the links between London's problems and

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developments in the broader national and international situation.

More practically, if the booklet is to have maximum value in developing agit prop around particular campaigns, it is essential to flesh the arguments out with relevant details for each locality and sphere of struggle. This is particularly urgent in the present context of the cuts and the joint campaigns being developed by consumers and public sector trade unionists, and the trade union movement more generally.

Both these tasks are firmly on the agenda for the London District CP's new Community Politics Advisory Committee. Further details of the work of this advisory committee can be obtained from the London District CP.

Expansion of Marx Memorial Library

Jack Dywien (Chairman, Marx Memorial Library) writes: Marx Memorial Library, founded in 1933, has had many large acquisitions recently.

The most important is the Radical and Chartist section of the extensive Library of James Klugmann. This rare and priceless material is being classified and catalogued, and enhances our already extensive holdings. It will be housed in a wing of Marx House we have not occupied before, and will be a fitting memorial to James' scholarship.

As well as being editor of *Marxism Today* James was, until his death, an activist on the Committee of our Library, which always benefited from his wit and wisdom.

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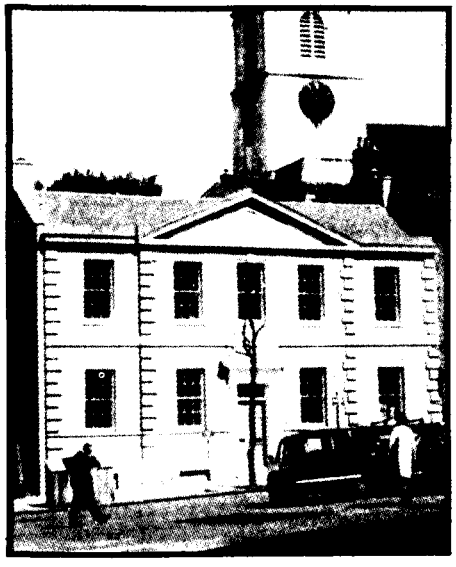

Apology

We wish to apologise for the fact that the summary at the end of Mark Harrison's article on Stalin in the October issue had to be omitted at the last minute because of a shortage of space.

Nicos Poulantzas

Paul Webster writes: As we went to press, we learnt of the tragic and untimely death of Nicos Poulantzas. His death robs the West European Communist movement of one of its leading theoreticians, a figure whose work represented important advances in the development and application of Marxist analytical concepts. His theoretical rigour and his willingness to engage in critical self-examination ensured that Poulantzas' contribution to Marxism remained consistently innovative and original. His membership of the Communist Party of Greece (Interior) (he stood as a parliamentary candidate at the last election) and his deep involvement in the strategic debates of the Western European Communist movement meant that much of Poulantzas' work, while sometimes highly complex and abstract, was of underlying political relevance, focused as it was on the real problems of the struggle for socialism under conditions of advanced capitalism.

He was concerned, by building upon the work of such figures as Althusser and Gramsci , to advance our understanding of the institutions and processes of contemporary capitalist society; his work on the state and on class structure, his wide ranging critique of reductionist and deterministic Marxism, opened up whole areas for research and refinement within Marxist theory. His interpretation of fascism constitutes a major contribution to political and historical analysis. Poulantzas' continuing participation in debate will be sorely missed; his published work remains as a testament to the power and vitality of Marxism.

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